Ore, Twintail ni Narimasu Volume 1

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俺、ツインテールになります。

水沢夢 [イラスト]春日歩

GAGAGA

俺、ツインテールになります。

水沢夢 [イラスト]春日歩

トゥアール
津辺愛香
観束総二
神堂慧理那

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デザイン／小林美樹代＋ベイブリッジ・スタジオ

キャラクター名鑑 001

みつかそうじ
観束総二

SOJI MITSUKA

DATA

性別：男

年齢：15歳

誕生日：2月2日

身長：164cm

体重：52kg

誰よりもツインテールを愛する高校生。世界最強のツインテール属性を持っていたことから、テイルギアをまとい変態たちとの戦いへと身を投じていく。
優しく正義感も強いが、平均的な思春期男子が持つ性欲の大半がツインテールへの執着に転化されており、その淡泊ぶりは女の愛香でさえたまに心配するほど。トゥアールが来るまでは、愛香の加減を知らないツッコミを一身に受け続けていた。

キャラクター名鑑 002

つべあいか
津辺愛香

DATA

性別：女

年齢：15歳

誕生日：8月8日

身長：157cm

体重：46kg

B72・W56・H80

総二とは家が隣同士の幼馴染で、危機感の足りない総二を過保護気味に守り続けてきた。
おしとやかでプロポーション抜群の姉がおり、そのせいで余計に自分の体型にコンプレックスを感じている。
トゥアール、そしてアルティメギルがこの世界にやって来たことで、彼女の運命も動き出す。現状、親友としての“関係”に満足している総二とは裏腹に彼女のほうは……。

キャラクター名鑑 003

トゥアール

DATA

性別：女

年齢：非公開

誕生日：非公開

身長：161cm

体重：50kg

B90・W57・H85

異世界からやってきた科学者。
トレードマークの白衣は特製品であり、空間に細工を施し収納性たっぷりのポケットに様々な道具を隠し持っている。
幼女好きだが百合趣味というわけではない。ひとめ目惚れした総二にアタックを繰り返しては、愛香の痛烈な妨害に遭うというのがパターンとなりつつある。
本人は総二たちと同い年と言い張っているが、本当の年齢は謎。

キャラクター名鑑 004

みつかみはる
観束未春

MIHARU MITSUKAMI

DATA

性別:女

年齢:36歳

誕生日:10月2日

身長:161cm

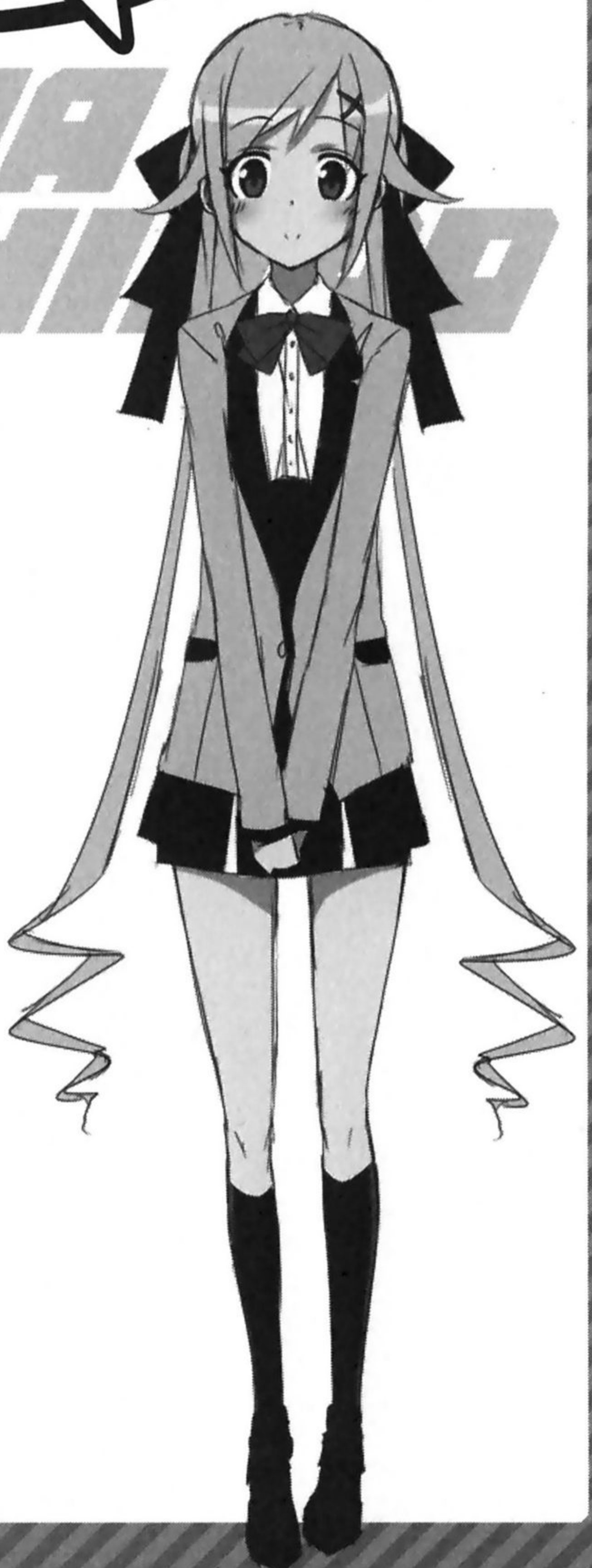
体重:49kg

総二の母。
現役バリバリで重度の中二病。
夫に先立たれているが、いろいろあって財産はある程度確保しており、今は趣味で喫茶店経営をしている。本人の夢が叶い、その喫茶店は秘密基地への入り口となった。
「とうとうこの時が来たのね」系統のいかにも中二病的な独り言は、子供の頃からほぼ毎日呟き続けてきている。

キャラクター名鑑 005

神堂慧理那（しんどうえりな）

ERINA



DATA

性別：女

年齢：16歳

誕生日：12月21日

身長：143cm

体重：40kg

B69・W53・H72

陽月学園の生徒会長で、総二たちの一つ上の先輩。
中学までは名門のお嬢様学校に通っていたが、高等部から外部編入した。生徒たちには、頑張るちっちゃな生徒会長として愛でられている。
ヒーローへの憧れが強く、ツインテイルズの一番の理解者。それ故か、彼女は認識攪乱装置の影響を完全には受けずにテイルレッドを見てしまっているようだが……？

キャラクター名鑑 006

ドラグギルディ

DATA

身長:282cm

体重:322kg

総二たちの世界にやってきたエレメリアンを束ねる、アルティメギル幹部。知勇を兼ね備えており、部下からの信頼も厚く、彼に憧れ師事する者は多い。

『五大究極試練』のひとつを修めた武勇伝は、今なお戦士たちの語りぐさとなっている。他を圧倒する最強クラスの戦闘力の持ち主だが、それにはある秘密があった――。

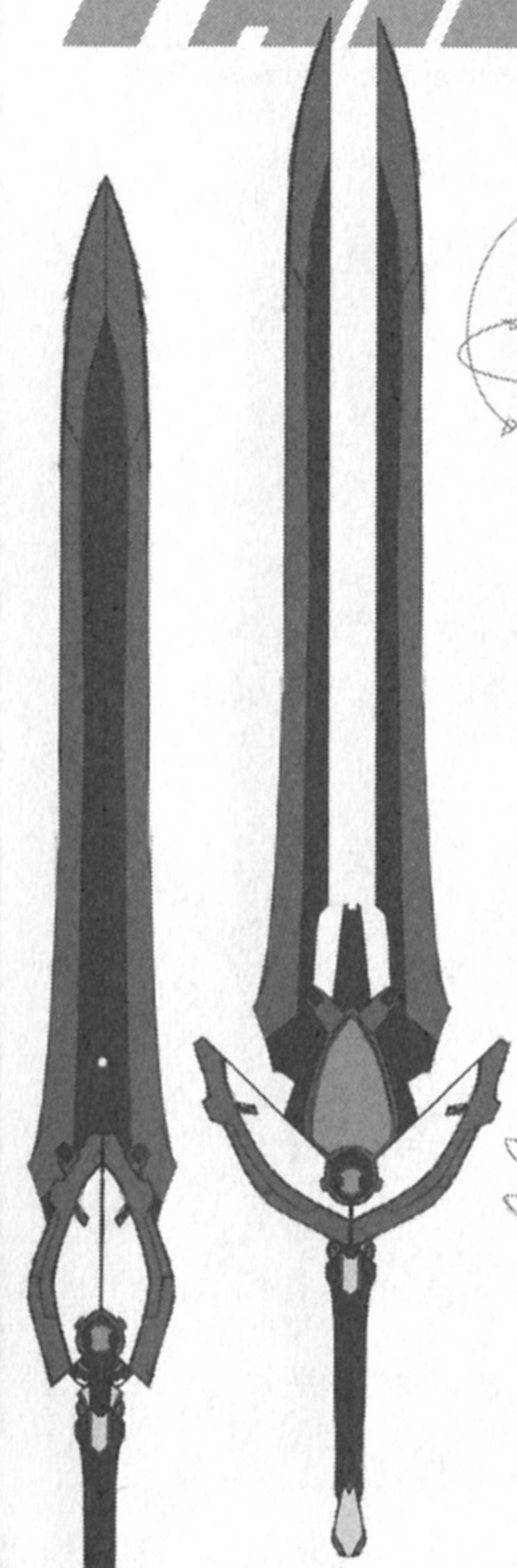
テイルギア設定資料 01

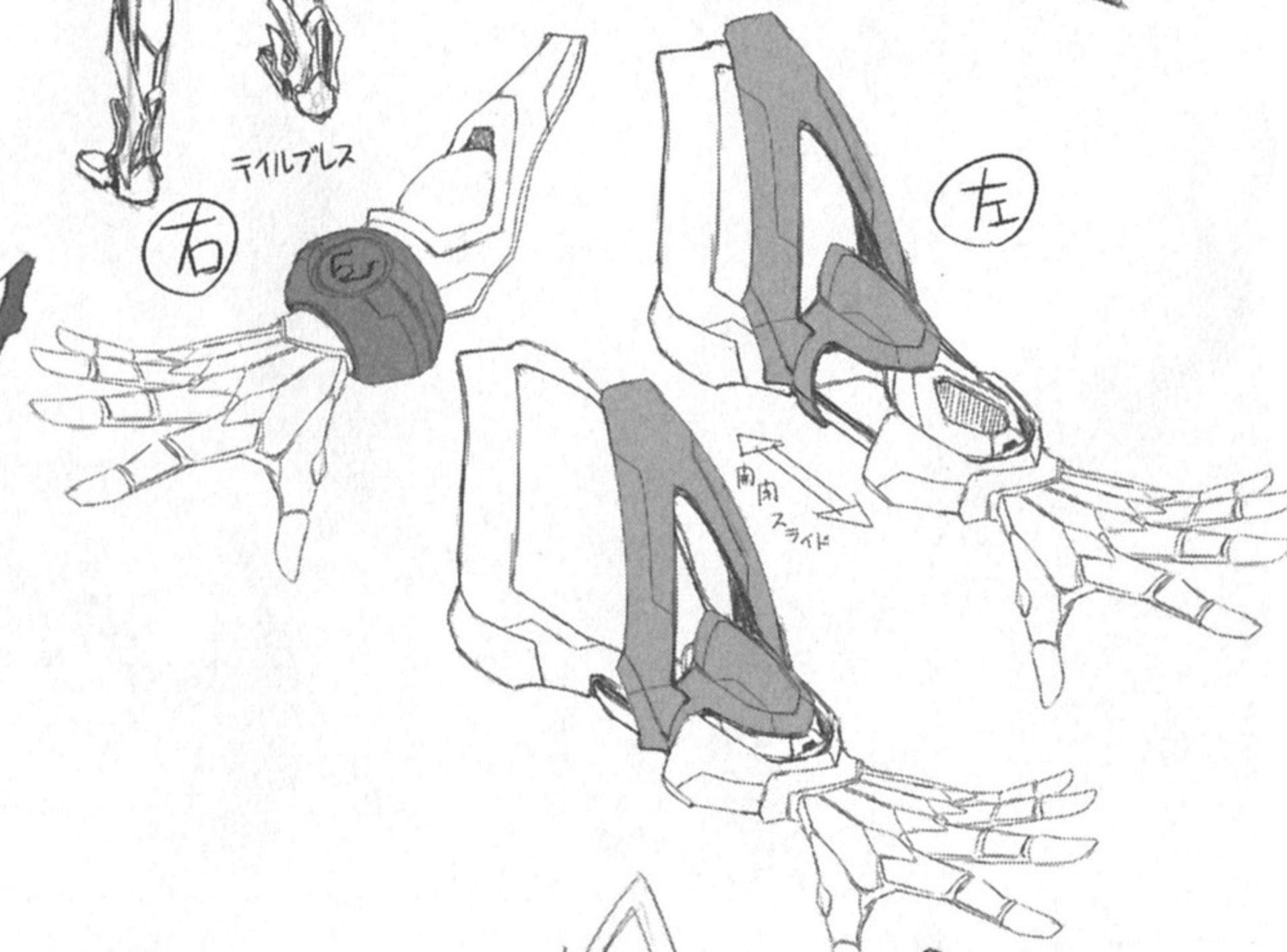
テイルレッド

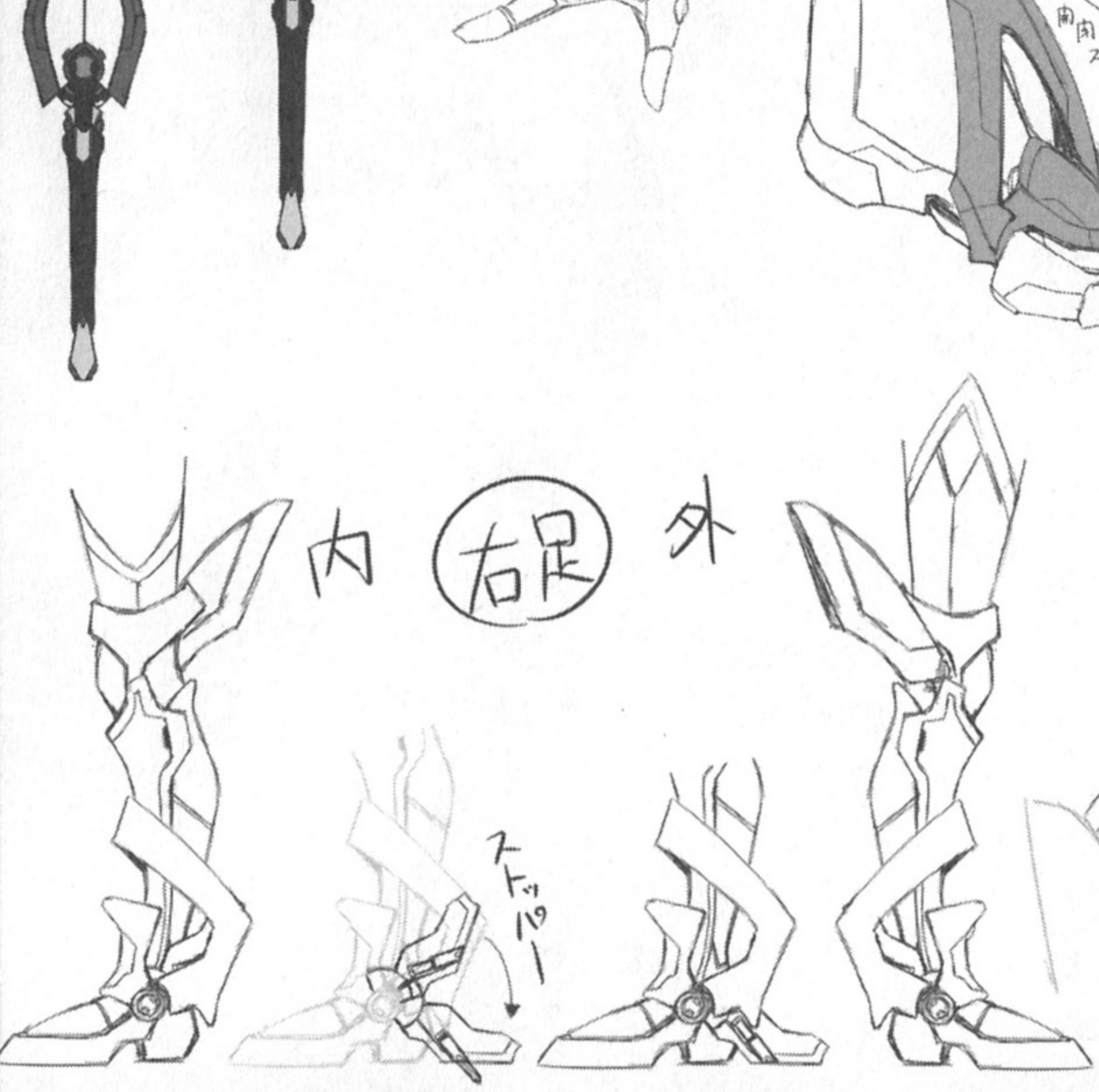
武器：
炎の剣ブレイザーブレイド
必殺技：
グランドブレイザー

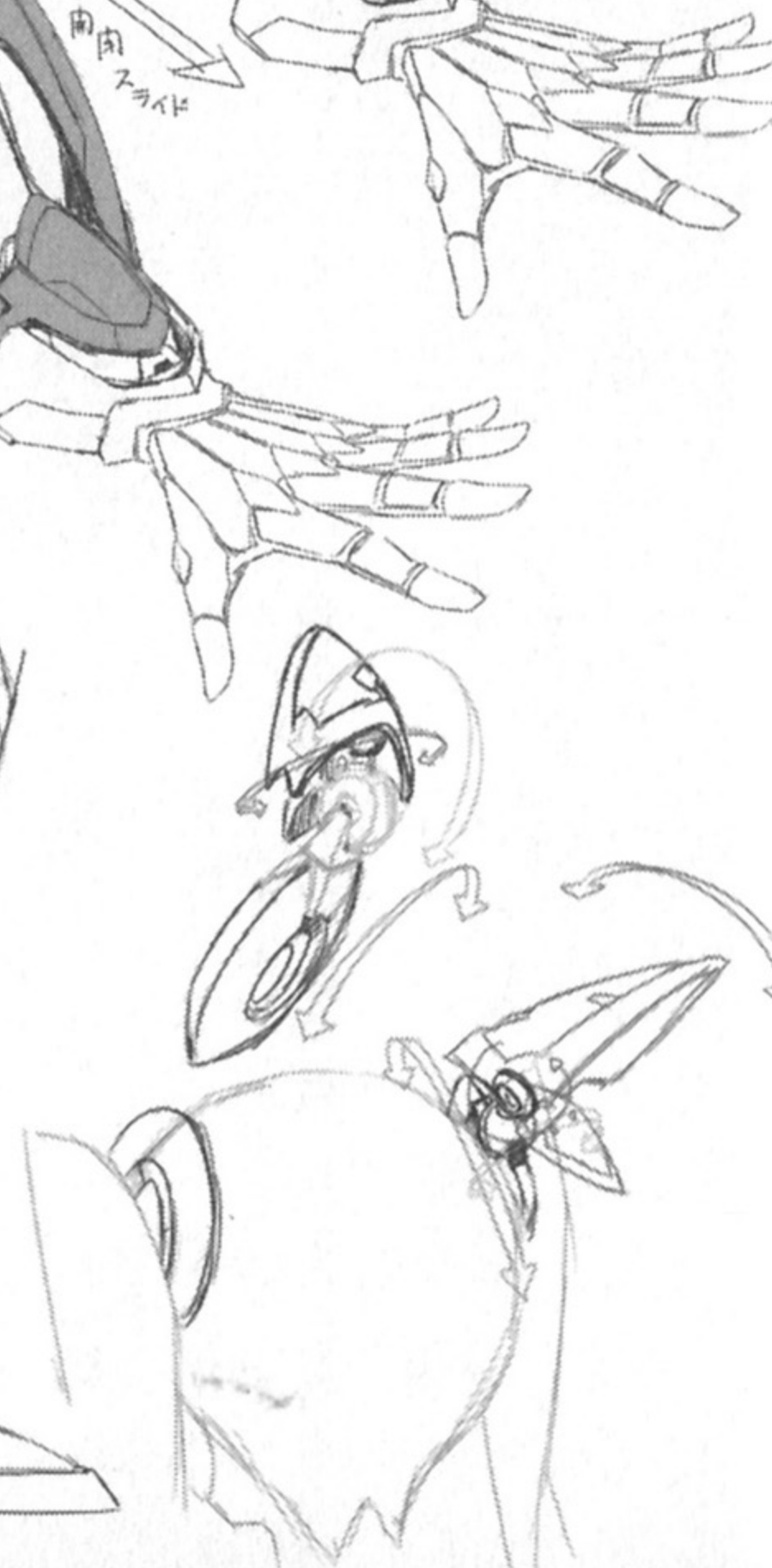
観束総二がテイルブレスで変身した姿。炎を操る。
総二のツインテール属性を十全に活かすためか、変身時のみ完全に女性化する。だが、そのメカニズムについては制作者であるトゥアールでさえ理解できていない。心の高まりに合わせ、戦闘力を無限に進化させていく。

TAILRED









テイルギア設定資料02

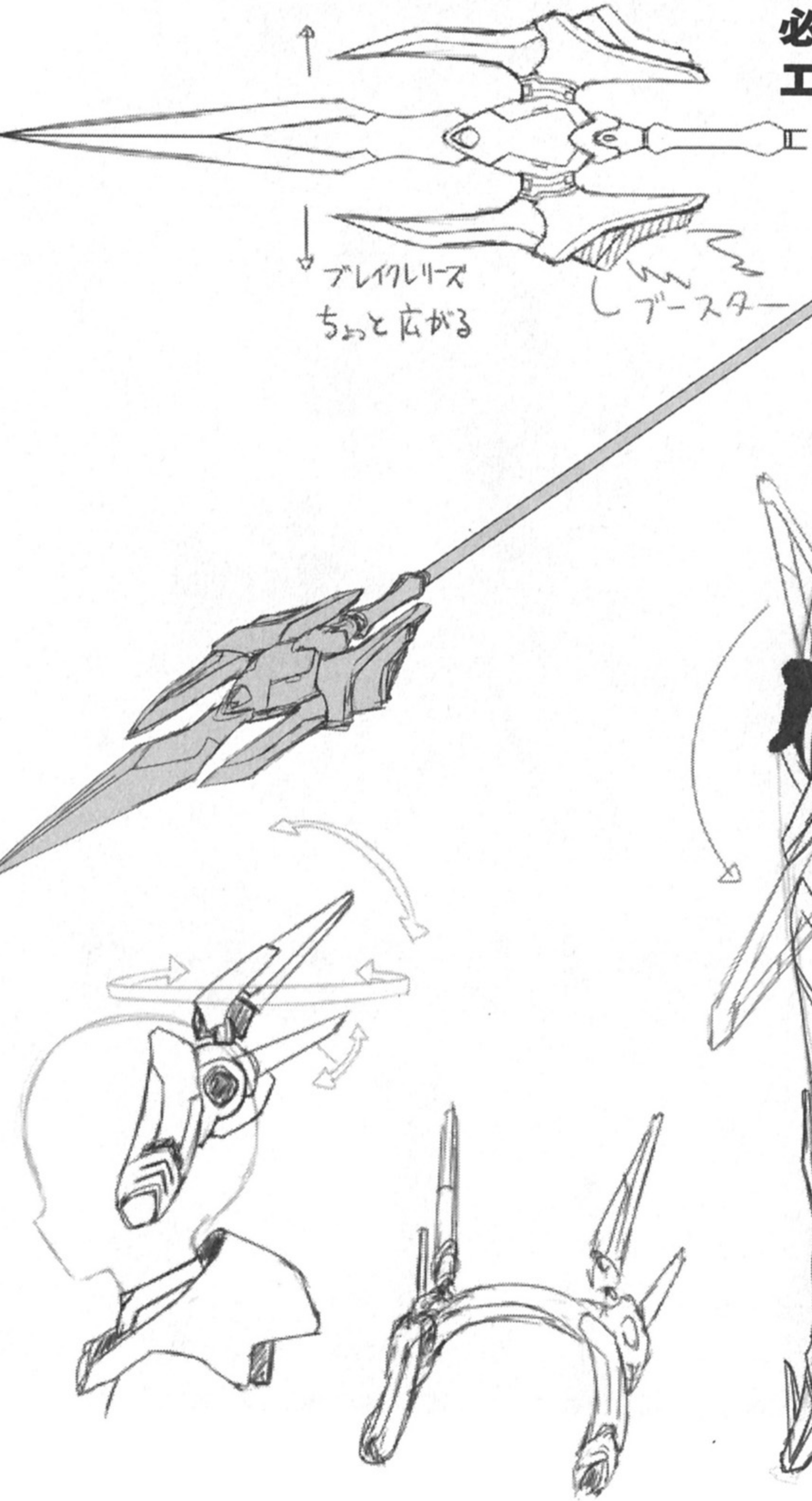
テイルブルー

津辺愛香がテイルブレスで変身した姿。水を操る。

トゥアールがまとっていた時はスピードを活かした戦闘に特化したギアだったが、愛香の闘争本能に呼応し、強引に攻撃的な能力を顕在化させられている。だが、胸を強調するデザインだけは影響を受けなかったようだ。

TAILBLUE

武器：
水の槍ウェイブランス
必殺技：
エグゼキュートウェイブ



Translated Character Cards

キャラクター名鑑 001

観束総二（みつかそうじ）

SOJI MITSUKA

DATA

- 性別：男
- 年齢：15歳
- 誕生日：2月2日
- 身長：164cm
- 体重：52kg

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キャラクター名鑑 002

津辺愛香（つべあいか）

AIKA TSUBE

DATA

性別：女
年齢：15歳
誕生日：8月8日
身長：157cm
体重：46kg
B72・W56・H80

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誕生日：非公開
身長：161㎝
体重：50㎏
B90・W57・H85

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DATA

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「とうとうこの時が来たのね」系統のいかにも中二病的な独り言は、子供の頃からほぼ毎日呟き続けてきている。

Prologue: Twintails and Me

I love twintails. The world is beautiful because it has twintails in it. I have known that ever since I was old enough to understand these things.

The sun for me isn't the bright round thing in the sky, but the hairstyle that catches its light.

It would be an exaggeration to say that they are the world to me, but... no, it's no exaggeration. In any case, twintails mean so much to me that nothing can ever replace them.

Twintails, in layman's terms, are two ponytails that are tied up on either side of the head. They look better with long hair, but short hair collected in little ties is also a cute and simple feminine style. There are a broad range of variations, and endless possibilities are hidden within.

I think that most readers have a picture in their mind after that explanation, even if they haven't heard the word before. But twintails seem to be a mark of childishness all over the world.

Girls in adolescence usually want to show everyone that they're growing up, and they let go of everything childish and everything they feel insecure about. Unfortunately, twintails are one of those things. They are weighed and discarded in the process of adulthood.

And women who look good with a twintail as adults are rare. And it's silly for guys to make unreasonable requests and irritate their loved ones. And so twintails leave you behind as you grow up.

That's fine. That's the normal course of life. But it's different for me.

I don't know if I should call it a longing or an inability to let go, but the more grown-up I become, the more of an adult I become, the more uselessly intense this feeling gets.

I search unconsciously for twintails when there are many people around, and the image editing software in my head has reached the point where it can instantly add a twintail layer with just one keystroke. It's unconscious, so it doesn't bother me, but still, twintails make up the majority of my life.

...Well, I've said twintails over and over again. At this point in the conversation, even people who seemed like they would become good friends start to remember other things they have to do and make a quick exit. It has always been like that.

Even so, I don't hesitate. And I have no regrets.

I want to live in a world where I can live loving the things I love. I don't like the idea of trying to change your tastes, or lying about what you like just because it's unpopular.

And that makes it all the more frustrating.

I love twintails so much, but as a guy, I can't have a twintail. Even if I grow my hair out for many years before finally tying it up, that will not be a twintail.

All I have is a heart that loves twintails. Maybe I cannot understand twintails, in the true sense.

So, I wish for this heart to take form. I want my feelings -- my heart to be real. I want it to appear before me.

I know it would have my ideal twintails.

If that were to happen, how wonderful it would be.

I was always, always dreaming of it.

Until the day that I met her —

Chapter 1: I am a Twintail

After school on the first day of my high school life. A day I should have had fond memories of.

I, Mitsuka Souji, together with my childhood friend Tsube Aika, was having a late lunch at the Cafe Adolescenza. It might seem pretty fashionable for us to be eating lunch at a cafe, but seeing as I live here, it's like a normal meal for me.

Its main selling point is our special house blend coffee. It has lots of fans, but, being something my mom does on the side, the shop is prone to being closed whenever she feels like it.

The sign over the door read "Closed". Of course, that meant that it was just the two of us in here.

The intense spicy smell hanging in the air was nothing compared to the weight of sorrow in my chest.

"Why the heck did I put down something like that..."

"There's no such thing as the Twintail Club," my childhood friend said, looking at me amazed. The smell of spice swirled around her.

"I was put on the spot... and wrote it down without thinking. I didn't mean to!"

"If you ask me, anyone that would inadvertently write down something like that is bad news. You have Twintails on the brain."

"Shut up! How many times do you plan to make fun of me for that?!"

"Yeah, yeah, ta-daa—"

She took the two tails on both sides of her head, long enough to reach her hips, and swung them at me.

"……ngh."

She may be trying her best to make me angry, but to me it feels more like a refreshing greeting.

As always, her twintails were wonderful to behold.

Waist-length twintails framing the head — they may be the most basic, but their simple purity shows you the elegant conceit of hair that has been worn in twintails

every day for years. A great artist's paintings can draw people in even when they aren't using flashy colours or a surprising subject. It's like that, I think.

"Still, the teacher didn't have to say it out loud..."

"Well, what did you expect when you wrote something that bizarre?"

"Well, excuse me!"

No matter how long we continue the pointless argument, it will not overturn this fact: there are over a thousand days of my life as a high school student ahead of me, and on the first day, I made the biggest mistake of my life.

The private school that I go to, Yougetsu Academy, can take you straight from elementary school into university. A super-escalator school. I wasn't going to feel different just because I'd moved up into high school.

That's what I thought, but... the size of the school building, the gymnasium, everything was so much larger than junior high school that I was overwhelmed.

And the highlight was the orientation in the gymnasium by the leaders of the clubs, after the entrance ceremony had ended. The various sports and culture clubs took turns making their appeals to the new students. The passion they showed moved me deeply.

But.

The image I see when I close my eyes is the girl who took the stage after that. To be exact, her hairstyle. Twintails.

Shindou Erina.

She may have been about as tall as a grade schooler, but her freshman welcoming speech as student council president would rival that of the greatest orators in human history. Her address touched the hearts of everyone who heard it.

"There are no limits to what you can accomplish here. I, together with the high school division of Yougetsu Academy, will guide your brilliant future on the path to its full bloom. I promise you!"

She may have been as tall as a grade schooler, yet the tone of her speech contained no hint of condescension.

The dignified manner in which she stood was mesmerizing.

(She's beautiful...)

I stared at her, forgetting to blink.

She may have been as tall as a grade schooler, but it was the first time I'd ever heard a woman use 'young lady' language, and she made it sound so natural that I was shocked.

And above all else – her twintails.

Hair, of course, does not have a peerage. But if it did, then those beautiful twintails would have held a high and noble title. The way the tips of her hair curled softly into circles also showed the excellence of her upbringing.

As she put heat in her words and moved more vehemently, the twintails danced through the air in response to her motion, as if she were a princess under a luxurious chandelier and the twintails were her partner on the dance floor.

I couldn't get my heart to stop pounding.

It felt like everyone around me was staring at her as though a kitten had gotten up on the stage, but I'm probably imagining things.

The student council president has such amazing twintails. I can only imagine how wonderful the next three years of my life are going to be.

On the way back to my classroom, I paid no attention to my chattering classmates. They were like a candle compared to the brilliant light still burning in my heart. The lingering memory of the orientation wasn't much more than a fart.

All I could see was that beautiful scene. My head was full of twintails. I had my head in the clouds for the self-introductions once we got back to the classroom, too.

And I don't even seem to have noticed when they handed out the club questionnaire.

"All right, pass your sheets forward starting at the back, ple~ase."

"Oh!"

The class rep's slow drawl brought me back down to Earth. The girl whose name I didn't know (of course, because I hadn't listened to her introduction) handed me some sheets. In a panic, I scribbled something on the the paper before me.

"Hm hmm... Huh~? Someone forgot to write their name on their survey~"

"Oh... Sorry. I think that's mine. I was rushing."

The teacher looked up from the sheets she was going through and tilted her head in doubt, so I said my name.

"Ahh, Mitsuka-kun, was it? ...Twintail club? Did we have a twintail club here? ... Oh~h, you mean you want to set one up."

"What!? No, I didn't actually want to do that, really! I was-"

I was even more nervous, and I had gone beyond rescue.

"I see~. ... Twintail club? You must really like twintails , Mitsuka."

"Oh, yes, of course. Obviously."

— Conditioned reflex.

And here I was hoping that I could start anew, in this place full of fresh faces.

That was the instant that decided my position for three years of high school.

"Alright everyone, that's all for today's homeroom. It seems like there have been some deviants in the area lately, so be careful!"

"Why are you saying this now!? Look, teacher, please wait! I am serious! I really, seriously love twintails!! Wait, that's not what I... argh!!"

And so, the first day of my brilliant high school life ended, with me sabotaging myself in the most pathetic way imaginable.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah...."

Just the memory of it is killing me.

When I see a blank I write “twintail” in it. That is a pretty ridiculous conditioned reflex. It’s already part of my physiological makeup — no, it might be closer to the area of ecology.

“Mguh... mm. Seconds.”

Ignoring me and the full cup of coffee that hadn’t even touched my lips, Aika calmly put her hand on the second plate of curry.

Uh, I don’t have any appetite, so it’s fine, but still, that one’s mine.

“Writing that stuff down isn’t so bad, but that was pretty much the worst follow-up ever made. Why did you have to freak out so badly?”

“If you knew that I was nervous, then you should have come in and backed me up! Aren’t we friends!!”

“Friends... yeah.”

There was something sullen about the look on Aika’s face. What are you mad about? You just stole my lunch.

“You have to use questionnaires and stuff to make a good first impression. It's just an interest check, after all. Yeah, it says to write down clubs you're interested in, or clubs you want to start, and all that, but it's just a formality. What new student would suddenly assert themselves like that?”

“Uh... You mean...”

“You know what that means, don't you? By writing that down, you're telling everyone that, even after seeing all the clubs give their presentations, even after all their recruiting efforts, you still want to set up your own club. You get it, don't you?”

“And then I... wrote something strange like `twintail club’?”

“That’s right.”

“We can look back and analyze it calmly now, but you know, back then my mind was one hundred percent blank!!”

"Well, I could have at least stuck out my chest and said, 'A lot of people don't even know the word for that hairstyle, so don't suddenly start talking about it.'"

"That wouldn't have helped at all, and what were you going to stick out, there's nothing thbuhhh"

My little resistance was cut off in the middle. Aika's got a complex about her modest (non-existent) chest, which is why I like to rib her about it. But, as you can see, if you do that, she will punch you in the face with one hand while eating off her plate with the other.

It can't be helped, the rest of her is perfect.

Especially the twintails, and the twintails.

"Ugh. If only I was better at improvising..."

I don't think I'm exaggerating if I say that it's indirectly the fault of the student council president that my future was destroyed, the exact opposite of what she said in her speech. Although, as Aika says, I was basically inviting this result by being such a loser.

Sighing gloomily, I wrapped my arms about my head.

"Besides, that obsession of yours would have been exposed sooner or later. Look on the bright side. At least you don't have to worry about it anymore."

"You're telling me I've come to a crossroads in my life? Then don't just go on eating two meals worth of curry as if nothing's wrong! And I'm impressed you can eat curry while drinking all that coffee!"

You'd think someone like her, who could finish off two large plates of curry as if it were nothing, would have a bigger chest. Is it because of her hair? Does her body need all the nutrients just to sustain it...?

I felt a strange chill suddenly and glanced around the store.

"...?"

A woman customer was sitting alone. Her position was at an exact right angle to our seats.

Was it my imagination, or were her eyes flickering over here?

(That's strange. I thought Mom already closed the store.)

But when I look at the cup on her table, it seems like she was sitting there from the start. We just didn't notice. Probably Mom didn't take a good look around before she rushed off.

Great. I thought there would be no one else around. Why did I have to run my mouth like that? I'm not surprised she's looking.

"Hey, Souji... you're doing it again."

"Ah!"

Snapping back to my senses, I realized that I was holding on to Aika's twintails. She breathed out a tired sigh and I hurriedly released my grip.

It's half your fault for leaving them on the table and letting them slip into my grasp so easily — but that's a very selfish thing to say.

Because when they're as long as Aika's, if you don't lay them on a chair or a table, they'd touch the ground the moment you sat down.

"Sorry. I really can't help it. It's been like this since we were kids. Touching your twintails just... calms me down."

I know that already, Aika replied, coolly. She sighed again.

"Seriously. Thanks to you, I'm starting to feel ashamed of myself."

"And that's my fault?"

"What are you going to do if someone takes this the wrong way? They'll look at my twintails, and... and us being friendly... and connect the dots..."

Having exhausted her coffee, Aika kept glancing between me and the table, all the while pressing her index fingers together bashfully.

"What's the matter? Don't tell me you want to change your hairstyle?"

"N-no way! Why would I change my hairstyle just because someone said something about it? I like my hair this way, thank you very much!"

Exactly. Seeing this steadfast determination of hers made me proud to be her childhood friend.

Despite her attitude, Aika's the one person who would understand my love for twintails. As she said, we'd often get made fun of because we were always together.

But — neither of us cared about what anyone else had to say about it.

She's my childhood friend. My best friend.

Everyone has a friend or two they'd keep for life. Someone they can open their heart to. As for myself, by pure chance - that someone just happened to be a girl.

Part of it was because we were neighbours, but it seems like our families have been on good terms for a long time. That's why it's almost as if we were siblings. As if we were from the same family.

Back in grade school, I was never able to beat her in a fight. It was only afterwards that I found out her granddad had been teaching her martial arts.

Suppressing my wounded pride, I eventually started training with her at the dojo. I suppose that was when it

all started. Ever since then, we've always spent our time together.

For some reason, we'd always end up in the same class . No matter how classes got shuffled, or how many people transferred in, we'd see each other in class every year.

To be honest, it was starting to get really weird.

Aika was always popular. She's frank, honest, strong, and always so full of life - I mean, why wouldn't she be?

And here I am, screwing everything up in the first day of school. I hope I don't cause her too much trouble.

"—!?"

I felt another shiver run down my back.

"Huh? What's wrong?"

"Nothing..."

I kept my voice low. Aika seemed to have noticed it as well. That customer was still around.

"How... Why didn't I sense her presence...!?"

Although Aika was whispering, what she was saying was even more grandiose than usual. Do you normally sense people's presence as you go through your day...?

That woman was still sitting there. Quietly observing us.

Her eyes met mine. She hurriedly spun around, turning to face the wall behind her.

"What the heck...?"

Okay? That was strange, but I'd feel uncomfortable too if some other customer was kicking up a fuss across the room. Guess I'd better restrain myself.

While I started to relax, Aika was having none of it. I could tell she was on high alert.

Twintails have expressions of their own. Anger, sadness, joy, suspicion, and anxiety are just some of the emotions that they can show.

What I'm saying is - twintails are like a second mouth.

"..."

Aika gestured to me silently from the side of the table. That woman was now holding up a newspaper, as if to conceal herself from us.

She had poked a hole through it, and was peeping at us through it.

Are you kidding me?

It was beyond ridiculous. Was she filming some kind of comedy skit?

I became paranoid there might be some kind of hidden camera in the cafe. Please keep me from becoming Boy A in the credits.

"... Let's try not to make eye contact."

"Right."

Aika had also settled on that being the best course of action in this situation.

Our assumed suspect folded the newspaper over, set it on the table, and stood up.

For a moment, I hoped she would leave. Instead she went right past the entrance, heading in our direction.

Stopping right next to me, unphased by our shocked expressions, she looked directly at me with a smile on her face.

“Mind if I sit with you?”

“Hold it right there!” Aika shouted in a rapid-fire manner, exasperated.

“Yes?”

Aika stood up while scowling at me. I flinched instinctively. Leaning her head back, the woman began to laugh.

“Who are you?!”

“Don’t mind me.”

“I do mind!”

“I have some business with this gentlemen over here.”

“With me?!”

Like a tour guide giving information, she pointed in my direction with her palm open.

“Just what exactly do you think you’re doing?! Standing there with that calm look on your face in those flashy clothes. I’m gonna jam a straw in your cleavage!”

“Now, now, Aika, calm down. Please,” I said, looking to defuse the situation.

I was taken aback by how beautiful she was. She may have been be a bit odd, but seeing her up close, she really was an incredibly beautiful woman - young lady, from the looks of it.

Her Japanese was excellent, but she was definitely a foreigner. She had white hair... no, wait. Make that silver hair.

Like it was dyed, yet it seemed natural. Which made it even more unnatural. Silver hair like hers doesn’t exist. Yet, it was still beautiful.

It seemed to glitter in the dim lighting of the cafe.

Along with her long eyelashes, her eyes were so blue they reminded one of sapphires.

Following my gaze down the bridge of her nose, she smiled brightly with her delicate pink lips.

Like something straight out of a movie, she was a mysterious faerie., It felt like her entire body was surrounded in a faint glow, like the twinkling light of a firefly.

Above all, just barely below visible when you look at her face, the enormous volume of her breasts demanded your attention. What an outrageous fairy.

She looked to be around the same age as Aika, and yet the difference between them was almost depressing. The thin clothes emphasizing her cleavage clashed with her clean-cut features. Over which she wore a white robe. One might even call it a coat. The design was quite fashionable.

Her skirt, which one might even hesitate to call a mini-skirt... traced a line that made one wonder how her panties weren't visible. Yet, with one look at her long slender legs, any doubts about her ability to coordinate clothes vanished. It was certainly a sight not seen among the masses.

It's such a shame.

Twintails would undoubtedly suit sparkling silver hair like hers.

There I go again... I've barely even met this girl, and yet my brain was already filled with thoughts of twintails.

For a guy going through puberty, undressing such a cute girl in your mind would be a natural instinct, honed over millennia.

Naked? With twintails?

Hmm...

I suppose that still counts?

"Ow."

Aika jabbed me in the temple with her straw. What the heck are you doing, I asked, in a hushed tone. Aika simply turned her head away with a "Hmph!".

Watching the two of us bicker, the girl looked like she was smirking while she laughed. Instead of an innocent

laugh, I sensed a twinge of evil to her laugh. Maybe I'm wrong. She does seem like a very gentle person.

"Uhm, is there something that *we* can help you with?"

I unconsciously drew myself into the back of the chair.

The girl put her hand on top of the bench and leaned in closer to me.

"Yes. I have very important business with *you*."

"...Important business?"

Pretending not to hear her clearly wasn't working.

Re-iterating she only wants to speak with me... was it a language problem? Across the table, Aika's frown deepened.

"My name is Twoearle."

"I see... Miss... Twoearle..."

She's definitely not from this country. Nevertheless, her Japanese was impeccable.

"You sure like twintails."

"I love them."

Oops... that's what I felt inside. And I blurted it out immediately. Saying it out loud to someone I just met – I really didn't learn anything from what happened earlier today, did I?

"Would you mind not asking why, and put on this bracelet for me?"

"What the heck does this have to do with anything!?"

The girl known as Twoearle suddenly pulled an object out of her coat pocket and handed it to me. It was a very beautiful glittering red bracelet.

Taking advantage of my confusion, she softly took the bracelet and gently prised my fingers apart.

"H-hey now—"

With a mischievous grin, she grabbed the back of my hand. At which point, a strange tingling feeling shot through my body.

"Now, please put it on."

"He doesn't need it!"

Leaning over the table, Aika roughly grabbed the bracelet and pushed it back towards Twoearle.

"What is with you?! You just waltz over here and start pushing strange things onto him, how rude!"

"It is not anything suspicious."

"At this point, it's a little late to see it as anything but suspicious!"

As usual, she doesn't hold back even with people we've just met.

...Well, I do agree it's rather suspicious.

"...Uhm, well... hmm... ah!"

Twoearle abruptly clasped my hands and said, "It's me, Souji-kun. Me."

"...Eh?"

I was perplexed by her suddenly friendly tone.

"You remember me. Look, it's me. Twoearle. You see, I 've got a bit of a problem right now – so, could you please put that bracelet on?"

I think I'm imagining things, but the way she thoughtlessly leaned forward, exposing her cleavage to me, seemed as though she was begging for me to look at her ample chest.

"Uh, weeell..."

"What kind of idiot would use an ore-ore scam to someone's face!"

"Eeaagh!"

A whirlwind tore past me as I hesitated. Aika hit Twoearle's cheek with an open-palm strike of terrifying power, improved by a snap of the wrist.

"Are you insaaane?! Don't hit people that you just met, seriously!! That was a really sharp sound!"

My shout was already close to a scream.

And it was no wonder. That wasn't a slap but a little trick that aimed for the cheekbones — one of the jujitsu techniques of the Mizukage school taught by Aika's late grandfather. Overturning all theories of martial arts, it was meant to cause as much sharp and serious pain as possible to its target without moving the chest too much. Close to a torture technique.

And it had been carried out brilliantly and flawlessly by a mere high school girl.

It was no wonder that the old man had wanted to make her his successor right up until the moment he died .

"Souji, I'm sure this woman is a crook! Just like those people by the train station who say, I'll tell your fortune, come into this alleyway! But then they have a bunch of people with mohicans and spikes on their shoulders or something waiting there for you!"

"I don't know about the first part, but not the second!! "

If there is a villain here she's in front of me.

Twoearle was bent over with a hand pressed against her cheek. I felt worried and looked over at her.

"A-are you okay? This girl, sometimes she doesn't know when to hold back."

She's so beautiful, and she's a foreigner. It would really suck if this turned into an international incident.

"Huh?... I was holding back, it shouldn't be that..."

Aika started to look uneasy, although about at the level of a young kid with a knee scrape that you can fix by rubbing spit on it.

If you were holding back, then what was that noise.

"Oh, y, es... I am... fine..."

"Are you really okay...!?"

The way you're cupping your cheek and trembling tells me that you're not! I started to hold out my hand to her, and —

"!"

Aika desperately caught my wrist.

“Oh.”

...Twoearle had gotten the bracelet into my blind spot and was trying to put it on my hand.

“So you were just acting!”

“Why are you trying this hard? What do you want me to put my hand in that bracelet for...!?”

Getting a little uncomfortable with this after all, I took a step back. And my heart felt like it went back a hundred meters.

“But I am not asking for any money! ...Just put it in! All I want you to do is put it in! Please put it in, if you don’t put it in I don’t know what I will do!! If you want me to, I will put it in for you.”

I’m pretty sure she’s talking about the bracelet, but you could hear it as something else, so stop, please.

"You can't, Souji, if you put it on, they'll say you can't cancel any more or something and take a huge amount of money off you! Those mohawk guys are going to crash through the entrance of the store on armored buggies!!"

Aika's got a keen sense of danger, but her information seems to be a little bit lopsided. Twoearle put her hands together as if praying and looked straight into my eyes.

"Please. I will do anything you want if you wear the bracelet..."

"Eh?"

My mind was screaming no, but my heart skipped a beat. My eyes moved towards Twoearle's hair.

"Anything... you said?"

"Yes... I will do anything you ask of me. I will be fine with whatever special interests you may have! Especially the kinky stuff... ha... ha..."

For some reason, Twoearle was starting to breathe heavily. Her face was red.

"Don't say things like that!"

This is bad.

Is this what you call a cultural divide? Are the differences in humanity that difficult to reconcile? Even though we speak the same language, I don't think we'll ever be on the same wavelength.

"I don't know what you're thinking about, but asking him something like that is useless. The only thing he ever thinks about are twintails. He'd just ask you to tie your hair up or something."

"R-really!? But, he's a guy, isn't he!?"

I'm not surprised that Aika could tell what I was thinking, but Twoearle seemed more than a little shocked .

If you say you'd do anything...

Yeah.

Of course.

Twintails.

Twoearle raised her hands, half-smiling.

“You must be kidding me... It is alright! Think of this as advance payment. I’ll let you squeeze them, right here. .. hurry... they’re surprisingly soft!”

Her softly wobbling chest seemed to explode in my vision. I didn’t know where to look.

Cupping her hands over her breasts, Twoearle thrust herself at me.

“Get away, you pervert! I’ll crush your spine in self-defense if you come any closer!”

Why are you even explaining to her what you’re going to do in self-defense?

“Calm down, Aika! ... I get it, I get it!”

I have to stop this mess before Aika crosses the line.

“I’ll take it. She said it was free, didn’t she? It’s almost like picking a tissue off the sidewalk. If that’s all it takes to make her happy ... it is free, isn’t it?”

“Of course!!”

Her sudden smile, like a flower blooming, caught me off guard. If only she'd act a little more normal...

"No! Don't! She's just trying to scam you! It's like those spa treatment packages where they say the bath salts are free but it ends up being really expensive! She's just like one of those door-to-door salesmen!!"

"What are you talking about this time?"

"If he does not wear it, the world will end! Also, it is against the law to bait people by giving out bath salts for free!"

"That's exactly what I was saying, you free-bath-salt merchant!"

Seriously, what kind of a conversation is this? And what's up with all the bath salts?

"Anyway, if you do not put this on! All the twintails in this world are going to vanish!!"

"—What!!"

Twoearle's sudden exclamation was like a punch to my stomach. I stepped up to her.

"What the hell did you just say!?"

"Hup."

In that brief moment, Twoearle grabbed my arm, and slipped the bracelet onto my wrist.

"Wha—"

Normally, I wouldn't have been caught off guard like that. However, the spirit-shattering thought of all the twintails in the world disappearing, coupled with that pair of all-encompassing, enveloping, Gaia-class motherly breasts pressing against me — the assault on my heart and mind left me unable to avoid it.

"Thank goodness. Like this, we will be ready when it finally appears."

Looking at the clock, Twoearle breathed a sigh of relief before turning her teary eyes towards me.

Oh shit. I don't think she noticed, but when she's that close... every inch she moves makes her chest jiggle, pushing their soft, undulating mass against my body... this is bad.

Stay strong, Mitsuka Souji! You mustn't be defeated by something like this!

She's a foreigner, okay? This level of intimacy is probably completely normal for her. Don't imagine anything lewd! You'll destroy the esteemed image of Japanese men if it ends up showing on your face!

"Take it off! Throw that thing away!!"

While I was lost in thought, Aika grabbed me by my neck, forcefully pulling me away from Twoearle's embrace.

"Whoa!"

It felt as if I was flying. Can you believe it? She just lifted me up with one hand!

The sudden movement sent the cups, plates, and cutlery on the table flying all around me.

"Come on... h-huh!?"

Aika was pulling on the bracelet with both hands, her face twisted in exertion. Guess it fit better than I thought.

"Argh! I can't... get it off!!"

"Ouch! Ow, ow, ow, ow!! What the hell is this thing? It 's like a wedding ring that's gotten stuck on a finger joint !"

And unlike Twoearle, Aika has no `cushions', so having her press herself against me was very uncomfortable to say the least.

"A wedding ring!? Aaargh——!"

"Yeaaargh!! Stop! You'll rip my arm off!"

For some reason, Aika started pulling at it even harder than before. My arm jerked around as if it were a candle flame in the wind.

"This is... strange... Why is it... so tight...!? Look! There isn't even... a gap on this... thing!"

She's right. It's made of metal, and definitely isn't elastic. How did Twoearle even manage to get it on my arm in the first place!?

I wonder if you can unscrew this thing, I heard my childhood friend say. Stop! Humans don't work that way !

I almost wanted to cry from the suspicion and despair flooding my mind.

It's strange asking Twoearle to take it off after I let her put it on me, but I don't have any choices left.

"Um, excuse me, could you please—"

In a flash.

We were enveloped in a retina-burning, polychromatic stream of light.

As if we were melting into the air, our bodies began fading away along with the light—

And then, we were gone.

"I am very sorry about all this, but I thought it would be faster than an explanation."

I heard Twoearle say.

"—Huh? Huh!?"

Just as the burst of light faded from my vision, a very different sight greeted my eyes.

Soot. The acrid, stinging smell of smoke filled the air around us.

I looked around in a panic.

Sunlight. Wind. Sidewalk. Asphalt.

It was a feeling unlike any that I'd experienced before. My body struggled to get up to speed.

"Why are we... outside?"

We weren't dreaming, were we? How did we get outside without even noticing it?

"Answer me! Why are we here!?"

Our surroundings were familiar, yet it took quite some time for me to recognize them. No way. How could we have made it here?

'Maxim Horizon', the biggest convention center in town. A giant building, spanning two blocks, with an equally large open-air exhibition space. Events, live concerts, and other activities were often held here.

Somehow, we ended up at the center's open air parking lot.

Roughly 20 minutes away from where we previously were. By car.

"Earlier than expected... I intended for us to have some prep time, but I guess we'll have to wing it."

In contrast to the two of us, Twoearle was completely calm.

"I really should have done this earlier..."

She was holding a small stick, about the size of a pen and talking in a very subdued voice.

Unless I'm mistaken, that pen-like thing was what emitted that strange burst of light.

"W-what did you do to us!?"

"I did not intend to bring you along with us, Aika-san, but unfortunately, you would not leave the effective radius. Sorry about that."

For a moment, I thought they would end up having a (very one-sided) argument again, but a loud sound derailed my train of thought.

"What is it this time!?"

And then, we finally understood what was causing all the soot and smoke.

It was absolutely unbelievable. Cars around us were cooking off like popcorn, sending plumes of smoke and ash into the air.

"This can't be happening..."

Earlier, I thought we would end up being on some comedy program. Now... it was as if we were passers-by getting caught up in some Hollywood movie pyrotechnics display.

It just didn't seem real.

"Souji-sama. Please try your best not to leave my side. They will spot you. I cannot project my recognition jamming field very far."

"Recognition... jamming?"

Twoearle stopped me from moving closer to one of the flaming cars.

"If you stay beside me, they will not be able to see you. Look at that thing over there."

Twoearle pointed at something in the distance. In the middle of the parking lot was... something.

Both Aika and I leaned in for a closer look... and we both screamed.

"——— Whaaa!?"

"It can't be! What is that thing!?"

It's like someone forcefully jammed an insect's head onto a man's body. The figure was fully clad in some kind of armored exoskeleton.

Normally, I would have thought it was some actor in a suit, thanks to where we were, but—

Its weight — wherever it stood, cracks formed in the asphalt.

Its height — over two meters tall.

Its eyes — they never stopped moving, darting left and right.

Its teeth — they looked as if they could crush a boulder.

Its spines — as sharp as swords, and too many to count, extending from spine to tail.

Everything about it was as real as it could get.

Every cell, every breath it took, was real.

I really wish it was just a suited actor. I really hoped it was.

But, that thing... the mere sight of it filled me with dread. Pure, unrelenting—

“M—monster!”

The wreckage... the fire... and the smoke. And in the middle of it all, the swaggering figure of that unknown figure... it was almost picturesque.

Almost like a scene from a movie, made real.

“Come out, wherever you are!”

!!

As if flicking a bug, the thing sent a nearby car flying. At the same time, I clearly heard it say that line.

Speaking human language.

Speaking Japanese.

Aika and I were too shocked to say anything. The creature, not noticing our presence, twisted it's mouth, roaring.

Roaring those words of doom that would strike the hearts of its listeners with despair-

"Fuhahahahahaha!! All the twintails in this miserable world will be ours!!"

"Uuugh~~~~!!"

At the hoarse, resonant voice and the warped thing it was saying I came close to choking up blood.

We were pretty far from it here, but it felt like its voice was ringing right in my ear.

"...Hey, Souji, what are you doing wearing a theme park costume."

"That's not me!"

A large number of pure-black creatures manifested themselves around the monster.

The identical mindless drones were massed in a group, ready for battle. Their strange forms were uniformly solid black. It was an incredibly eerie sight.

The combat drones skittered away, dispersing rapidly in all directions, capturing a number of random girls.

“Twin... tails...”

But my heart was not beating fast because the girls had twintails. It was because of the monster’s orders.

“What are they holding... Hey, it’s twintail girls!”

“What are they planning to do?”

Unlike Aika and I, who fretted in hushed voices, Twoearle silently tracked their movements.

“Even so, this world is regrettably lacking in twintails! Draped in nothing but steel and electricity — it’s like they never left the Stone Age!”

It was clearly speaking Japanese, but something was off. Something... no, everything.

"Oh well, that just means we have to find twintails of the finest quality!"

With a wild tone of voice, the monster walked with its shoulders held high.

"Don't forget the orders from our commander, you vermin! Top quality twintails have been detected in this area, so leave no stone unturned! … There might even be a young girl crying while holding her stuffed bunny rabbit!"

"... Moke? Moke- "

"Hold your tongues! Gathering all of the twintails is our ultimate goal… however! Beyond being a soldier, I'm also a man… and so I'd also like to see a young girl holding a stuffed animal! Find me one and there will be a reward waiting for you!!"

It wasn't my imagination.

No, it was speaking fluent Japanese, but for some reason nothing it was saying made any sense.

"We have no need for adults! Drag them out here quickly! I don't mind if you're a little rough!"

The black creatures were moving efficiently to carry out its orders.

"Moke-"

"What? There are no young girls carrying stuffed animals!? Hmm, if girls don't have stuffed animals, then a man can provide!! I don't care, bring them here!"

...Although, can you really call these orders? He's shouting so crazily that I think if he had something hard in his hand he would throw it.

"Heeeelp!"

A crying young girl was brought in front of the monster.

The way she looked, with her twintails disheveled under the eyes of the grotesque, hulking figure, made me think of a shrine maiden taken for human sacrifice, the victim of a crime against nature.

I tried to jump out, but Aika grabbed my arm and stopped me.

My hazy brain began to catch up with what was going on. I got the situation clear in my head, at least.

“They’re only taking girls with twintails, what are they planning to do?”

The monster and his troops weren’t hurting them. Rather, they were giving them dolls to calm them down.

So we can stay here and watch for now, but...

“Hey, Twoearle, you took us here because you knew this was happening, didn’t you? What is that monster...”

Halfway through the sentence, I couldn’t believe my eyes.

In my line of sight was something I should never have seen.

Well, this isn’t the place for sarcasm. But the radiant sight that had burned itself into my heart earlier today had not been a dream or an illusion. I knew that now.

"The... president..."

No mistake. That was it, the source of my suffering from the first day of high school life, the diabolical hairstyle that had charmed me in both the good and bad sense of the word.

Two of the solid black combat drones were dragging along Shindou Erina, president of the student council, in her school uniform, one on each arm.

"It's, it's her! Hey! Isn't that the president?"

It looks like Aika has noticed too.

In the gym there were maids standing by her silently to attend on her, but I couldn't see anyone like that now.

The president was holding something tight in her arms as if it were important. It was hard to see, of course, but the thing sticking halfway out of her shopping bag looked like a toy from a kids' tokusatsu series.

"Release me!"

Determined resistance.

The monster ran his eyes over her as if he were deciding on her price.

“Ho-hooo, a nice little child! Not only that, but she looks like she’s a princess! A twintail princess... no, indeed, this is nearly perfect! Yours could be the ultimate twintails!!”

“Ultimate...!? No, tell me who you are! You speak human language, don’t you!? Set the other girls free!!”

“I do. As you can see, we can communicate well with each other. And so, I tell you that I cannot release them.”

“Then what are your intentions!”

“You’ll understand soon! First, while I have the opportunity...”

The monster handed a large stuffed animal to the president with an overfamiliar gentleness.

“I want you to hold this kitten stuffie! There is sweetness even in your hostility. A kitten stuffie suits a naughty young girl well!! Hug it!!”

The jet-black figures came up carrying a three-meter-wide pink sofa which it was hard to believe existed, maybe part of their supplies.

They forced the president, now holding the stuffed animal, to sit on it.

“You all, engrave this sight into your minds! Twintails, stuffed animal, and resting on a sofa! This is the golden ratio that my long years of discipline have led me to!!”

“““Mokkekeke—!!”””

The monster was acting like it had at last succeeded in turning gold into a base metal, and on top of that the shrill voices seemed to be cheering it for what it had done. I felt light-headed.

“...We understand that they are aiming for girls with twintails, anyway... Tell me, Twoearle, what can I do? You brought me here because there’s something I can do, right?”

“I will leave the details for later. Right now, we will act .”

My legs were trembling a little despite my brave act, but Twoearle ignored that. She was so calm that she seemed reliable.

“Souji-sama... First, please take off the clothes I am wearing. No, more like rip them off, please. ...Oh, yes. Push both of my arms above my head like this and hold them there... Like this, Souji-sama, with one hand. Then with your other hand, pull off my bra...”

“What is wroooooooooong with you!!”

Twoearle had been making gestures to go with what she was saying.

“Aika, too loud!”

I hastily clapped my hand over her mouth, but—

“Ohh, I sense the presence of a new twintail... Where? Where are you hiding!!”

(What is a presence supposed to be!)

I left that comeback inside my heart, and looked at the twintails beside me. Certainly, they do draw the eye, but. ..

"Aaah, I'm a twintail too—!"

"Wheeeare are yoooou!!"

We were sixty or seventy meters away from the center of the huge open-air parking lot, but the thick, harsh voice sounded as though it were coming from right next to us. Still, even though we weren't under any kind of cover, he can't see us. What is this?

He's looking straight at us, but he doesn't seem to notice.

I felt deja vu.

Aika's words in the store went through my mind.

— "How... Why didn't I sense her presence?"

Recognition... jamming... that's what she said earlier.

"...Oh, ohh... Even though I was taking the serious route that I'm not used to and holding it in... This situation I was longing for... The script I polished over and over again... I can't believe my plan was crushed the moment it started..."

Twoearle's glare at Aika was a mixture of resentment and disappointment. Apparently something hadn't gone well for her.

"There's some way we can help those girls, right!? Come on, tell me!!"

Impatient, I grabbed her shoulders hard.

"Aan..."

For some reason a seductive voice.

"Oh, we can do a course correction! Well, Souji-sama, let us go ahead with the script just like before! Shove me against the wall like this, and we're up to the place where you rip all my clothes off at once! Take them with one cut !!"

"Why don't I shove you against the wall? As hard as I can!?"

Under Aika's glare, Twoearle reluctantly said, "I, I understand. It is true we do not have much time, so I will skip a little! And they can sense her Twintail Element even through recognition jamming, so even in the first battle I do not think we can take them lightly."

Did you say “the first battle?”... but I didn’t have time to wonder, because what she said next was even more outrageous.

“Souji-sama, use the bracelet I gave you and transform !”

“Transform!?”

“This is what she was going for! All that stuff earlier was for this!”

Twoearle ignored Aika and continued.

“That device creates a battle suit that will reinforce your physical power. You should become at least a match for that monster when you transform.”

“Are you serious!?”

Just as if it were a kids’ superhero show or something like that.

...But I was willing to grasp at any straw right then, and my heart soaked it up without resistance as if it were a voice from heaven.

She could have said any crazy thing to me and I wouldn't have been able to imagine it was a joke or a trick after the unreal experience of being put through the teleporter.

At least there's no harm in trying.

"Wa, wait a minute, I don't know about transforming, but why do you need Souji to do something that dangerous!!"

"You idiot! The enemy's target is twintails!! How can we overlook that!!"

"...Wait, umm, that's the most surreal thing about this, or rather, that goal is too stupid... Or Souji, can't you at least say that it's because they are kidnapping girls...?"

"No, that is how it should be. It is because you love twintails that you can use the bracelet. There is no need to act like you care about justice."

"No, I mean, I did want to rescue the girls, I was thinking that..."

An enemy who's aiming at twintails, and supposedly I can fight against them because I love twintails? What is this?

Really more and more this seems like a joke.

The earth shook so much that I seemed to float for a second, and then came an ear-splitting roar.

"Souji, the people they caught!"

A terrifying scene was unfolding where Aika pointed.

A tragic scene as though I were looking into hell.

In the very center of the parking lot — the parked cars had been torn out by the roots and scattered and the girls they had caught were lined up single file.

An improvised ceremonial site.

I don't know if the girl at the front of the line had fainted, but she didn't seem to be moving as her body floated into the air.

Like a lion jumping through a flaming hoop, the girls in the line moved through a metallic ring with light stretched across it in iridescent colours like a soap bubble . The moment the first girl passed through, her hair came gently untied, and she drifted back down tracing an arc across the sky.

One by one, the instant they could put the next one through, the girls went through the ring as lifeless as parts on a belt conveyor.

In less time than it took to blink, it was President Shindou's turn... and even the beautiful twintails that had fascinated me dissolved into the air.

"All the twintails in this miserable world will be ours!"

That had sounded like a joke, but I was seeing it for real now.

"— Those bastards."

I felt something deep snap in my heart for the first time in my life.

“Souji-sama, please compose yourself. It is still all right, they can still be saved.”

“Tell me...! How can I save the twintails? How can I destroy those guys?!!”

“You’re kind of exaggerating... You know, they don’t seem to be hurt at all aside from losing their twintails?”

“Exaggerating, you say.....!?”

I grabbed Aika by the front of her shirt and lifted her up with violent emotion overflowing in my heart.

“Aah...”

“Is that all that twintails mean to you? If someone takes them, then that’s fine, you don’t really care? Were they such a little thing to you?!!”

“Ca, calm down, Souji. They’ll notice us again...!”

“...S, sorry.”

When I heard Aika's out-of-character thin voice without any force in it, my head cooled off a little, and I let go of her.

"I'm sorry for shouting at you too, Twoearle. But tell me how to use this thing. Quickly."

"...Are you serious!? No, Souji, you shouldn't! Especially after earlier! I don't think you can trust her at all!"

Aika's voice had tension in it like she was trying to talk a friend out of murder.

"I don't care if it's stupid or if it's dangerous. I can't forgive those monsters for playing games with twintails!"

Twoearle had been at least half messing around with me, but I think that that part of my feelings got through to her.

She nodded with an earnest expression, and explained, raising her own right arm to her chest.

"Please wish in your heart, 'I want to transform.' Wish hard. If you do that, the bracelet should activate."

"That's all I have to do? I don't think about anything specific?"

Twoearle nodded forcefully.

"Okay. Sounds like something even I can do."

"Souji!!"

I gathered my resolve and raised the bracelet to my chest, making a fist with my right hand.

Closing my eyes, like she had told me, I wished hard, hard.

I want to transform... I want to save the president, those girls. To take back the twintails. To become someone who can defeat those bastards.

It wasn't righteous anger. Is there a guy anywhere who can just keep quiet after he sees something he loves trampled into the dust!!

The next instant—

The “transformation” really happened, just like that.

Light began to shine from the bracelet on Souji’s right arm.

An intense light as though soundless fireworks were exploding before his eyes.

“Aahh!”

Aika covered her eyes with her arm at the unexpected brilliance.

Bands of red light looped around Souji’s body, forming a cocoon. As specks of light flooded out, they tightened around him.

An even brighter sudden flash.

They began to change the barely visible silhouette.

Shoulders, chest, hips, legs - from the top in order light burst like an explosion, and Souji was covered from the neck down in a red suit. But this all happened in a hundredth of a second — the work of an instant, faster than the eye could see.

Spraying out like steam, lines of red light.

And although it was strange, Souji was surrounded by a radiance that didn't come from reflected light, just like Twoearle's silver hair.

"Awesome... I really did transform..."

Souji put all the strength into the fists, testing how it felt.

As far as he could see, the suit covered the body without a gap, from the tips of the feet when he looked down to the fingertips he was opening and closing over and over again. But he seems to have noticed before long that there was no pressure on his head.

"Huh? My face... It isn't hidden!?"

Touching the cheeks, Souji was disturbed to find that they weren't covered.

"The suit itself is not that important to the defense system. Also, it is using Imagine Chaff as a countermeasure, so even though your face is uncovered, other people will not realize that it is you, Souji-sama."

"Imagine... What's that?"

"It is something so you do not have to worry about people finding out your real identity! Please fight with peace of mind!"

"I, is that so? Okay! Let me try this...!!" I don't really understand the practical side very well, and there are a lot of things I'm still worried about, but there's no time left.

Souji put his faith in Twoearle's words and started to run toward the battlefield, his hair gallantly *fluttering behind him*.

"Nh, uh..."

Souji had already vanished by the time Aika opened her eyes.

"That idiot! Why did he agree to all of this so easily?!"

Aika knitted her eyebrows and looked around.

"Hey, you, uh... hey, Twoearle."

"Yes?"

"There weren't any other girls around here just now...?"

"Li... light, what is this, I can't run so easil... whoaaa—!!"

As if someone had put the decimal point in the wrong place, the power in my legs was so great that I kept almost falling on my face when I sprinted.

I was reminded of the time when I was bored and tried setting the running machine to maximum speed.

Please focus your awareness! Souji-sama, that suit, the Tailgear, is created with the power of your mind. You must drive it with your will!

Some kind of communications device? I heard Twoearle's voice as if she were whispering into my ear, although I don't think anything was mounted on it.

"The force of my mind... My will...!!"

This time, I tried to wrap my awareness around my legs.

Up until then it felt like I was clinging to a car moving at top speed, but I suddenly started to feel my feet landing on the ground through the suit.

It wasn't like driving a car, it was a sense of complete unity like I had become the car.

I had already reached the parking lot and gone more than halfway across it, kicking the rubble out of the way as I was running without trying to avoid it. I could see the girls lying unconscious on the asphalt now.

I know they regretted having their twintails stolen.

I'll absolutely get them back for you...!!

"Hmmm, magnificent Twintail Elements... But at this rate, I'm not sure if we can obtain the greatest power under this star, the one the Commander was praising as the ultimate..."

It seems like my hearing has improved, too. I can hear the monster muttering something cryptic to President Shindou, lying at his feet.

My anger hit its peak when I saw the president with her twintails cruelly untied.

"Stoooop——!!"

"Mu!?"

I planted my feet on the ground, braking at high speed . As I did, something like stoppers came down from somewhere near my ankles and jammed into the asphalt, scraping it and blowing off sparks and dust.

(...What ridiculous strength. That girl created this...!?)

A sense of awe filled my body at the unknown power, taking my mind off my anger. And then I started to be

afraid. I was surprised again by the kind of power the girl called Twoearle had in her hands.

How had she created something with this kind of terrifying strength? Just as I was told, just as I had wished, I had accepted it, but had that been the right thing to do?

No, I don't have time to think about that now. I have to concentrate on saving the twintails... saving the people before me.

"You understand human language, right, monster? Give these people back the twintails that you... took."

"Tha... You are..."

"...Did you not hear me...? You stole their twintails. Give them back, goddamn you!!"

My anger itself hit him together with my scream.

It sounds strange when I say it, but I understood that the strange ring could take people's twintails away from them. And so it should also be possible for it to give them back.

Who would subject someone to this kind of danger just because they have twintails? The word “irrational” is not good enough for them, it’s absurd, it’s monstrous.

“Steal the twintails.” If what they said, if their objective were known to the public, then tomorrow there might not be anyone wearing twintails anymore. Because it would be stupid to take the risk.

I can’t... I can’t forgive that...!!

“Whoa... whooaaaaaaaaaaa——!?”

When I scowled at him, the monster soared high into the sky as if he had been caught in a sudden gust of wind .

“Gahaaa!!”

The ground hit him face-first.

“H, hey.”

“Nnn, nngh... Was I blown away by such a strong *young innocent*... Those are... spectacular twintails!!”

“...Huh?”

"The Commander's prediction was right when he chose this spot! Even if I leave out the girls before. It was you...! You've finally come! We didn't miss our mark, those are the ultimate twintails!"

The monster was staggering to his feet in exultation.

"The ultimate... twintails...?"

Something is strange.

What the monster was saying gave me an uncomfortable feeling, but at the same time I myself began to feel obscure doubt.

My field of vision, my viewpoint was oddly low.

Maybe it was my imagination, but the hands I was holding up also seemed smaller than usual.

"....."

Cold sweat ran down the back of my neck.

A premonition of evil stronger than I'd ever tasted in my life sent a chill through my whole body.

"Could..."

Like a rusty gear grinding, I turned my head over to the side.

One of the car windshields was still in its original shape. I saw the reflection and was speechless.

What would you call this.

— There was a girl with lovely twintails there.

"——— Oh."

Even now a "twinta~ils" sound effect rang like a chime in my head. Beautiful, spectacular twintails hanging down past the knee.

And ribbon-shaped pieces that moved up and down together with her breathing, so smoothly that they seemed to be swaying.

Her wide eyes opened even farther.

The word "armor" was a little off the mark for what she was wearing, a strange protective suit that didn't look like it had any weight at all, showy in its use of fashion with red and white as its key colours.

In places, on top of the body suit that stuck closely to her bare skin, angular mechanical-looking armaments had been attached. They were the source of a mysterious glow.

“Ohh.”

And, and and. There were giant attachments on either side of her hips, but the crotch area of the suit had been designed like a bikini, and half of her thighs were exposed.

I wasn’t sure if I believed this. But I tried touching my chest and groin. My chest was just as flat as it looked from outside, but my constant companion for half my life , the prince between my legs, my important partner, was cleanly and completely missing.

“O, oh...”

Now that I understood, I became more conscious of it. My unnaturally high voice.

Yes, the reflection in the glass was —

I, who had become a twintail.

"It turned me into a girl————————————————!!?"

A childish scream was absorbed by the sky.

"Wh...!!"

Aika, watching, was also lost for words.

"...What is that."

"That is our single strongest weapon against those monsters, the Daydream Armor, Tailgear! Aah, you are wonderful, Souji-sama! Ehehehehe big success."

Twoearle, with a ribbon of drool that was hanging down to the choker around her neck, stared at the panicking Souji with a look of ecstasy on her face.

"...It's too wonderful, I'm starting to cry!!"

Aika visited Twoearle with the palm of her hand, using even less restraint. It wasn't a pinpoint strike to her

cheek or somewhere this time but an impact to the whole top of her skull.

"Is, is this already a girls' catfight scene... or actually it is more like being mauled by a tiger..."

"Depending on your answer it really will be like that. What happened, why is Souji a wwwwwoman!! That's not just girls' clothing, is it? He's even way shorter now!! "

"...Aika-san. In order to obtain great power, you have to pay a corresponding price. It makes a person stronger to face the truth — little girls are cute, little girls!"

"Is this your fucking rotten hobby—!!"

The sound of a merciless blow.

"That's not transforming, that's warped!"

Of course, she didn't mean "warped" in the sense of metamorphosis.

"Fight fire with fire, they say. When the enemy is ' hentai,' a fighter cannot oppose them without becoming HENTAI to a certain degree themselves."

"So the enemy is yooooooooooooooooooou!!"

Thud, thud, thud...

The head of the beautiful girl whose default was complete corruption — Twoearle's imagination soared left and right in thrilling leaps.

Is this my punishment?

I've been saying twintails, twintails from childhood until now, did God finally get fed up with me and say, you're a pain in the ass, shut up, become a twintail already, and give me a shove in the back?

You shoved too hard, God. This isn't like I can stagger and keep moving forward, this is like a complete orbit of the Earth.

This is like even my cool entrance scene earlier looped once around the Earth and crashed into the back of my head.

"A, a, a, ah."

I was confused and unable to deal with reality, and the monster and the black things had completely surrounded me.

"Hmm, so you've decided you want to be ours? You have my gratitude! Show her along, and be polite!"

At my lack of resistance, the monster suddenly switched to kindness.

"Moke—"

The black thing... the soldier in front broke out into a run toward me.

"Ge... get awaaaaaaaaaaaay!!"

As I was waving my arms in front of me like a kid throwing a tantrum, I lightly hit the black thing, and it flew into the air with a clear 'thunk' sound like a plastic bottle rocket and crashed into a wall on the rooftop level of a distant building.

Its body began to glow. Before long, it exploded softly into dust and disappeared into the sky.

The monster let out a little noise of interest.

“Hnnn... One Ultiroid in one blow! You’re not just beautiful twintails... What is that fierce power!? Who are you, child!!”

The enemy’s words were getting bit by bit more old-fashioned, and now, as if we were actors in a period drama, he was handing me my promised “cue.”

Although judging from his expression he was serious.

Souji-sama! This is a great chance for a cool intro speech!

Intro speech?

“...What am I supposed to be?”

If you have something you want to say, then say it, God --

Aaah~, that is right, you did not decide what you were going to call yourself after you transformed, did you...!?

"No, I'm not worried about my name, I'm having doubts about my identity!"

Communicate, help me out, Aika... If I can't hear your comebacks, how am I supposed to do this?

Not who I am, I'm not even sure what I am.

"Waoo~h, I'm not sure what's going on but this downhearted little girl — I can't stand it!! One of you, get me a doll she can hug!"

"Mokee—."

The encirclement slowly tightened around me.

I could feel piercing stares even from the soldiers though I didn't know where their eyes were.

Like they were giving off desire as an aura.

The target of those innumerable desires — I didn't try to hold in the chill climbing up my spine.

"Uwaaaaaaaah!!"

Souji-sama, touch the ribbon piece and picture a weapon in your heart. It should create a weapon made just for you!!

"Rib, bo, n."

With bloodshot eyes, I hit one of the two metal ribbon pieces, the only armor on my head.

"Turn me, turn me back into a man.....! Agagagagagagaga"

The ribbon does not grant wishes!?

What is this... I'm not in a fairytale with a moral, there's no way this punishment can happen, no way I turned into a twintail!!

I hit the ribbon over and over.

Whether my bitter wish got through or not, it lit up and a burst of flame shot out. Forming a spiral in the air, it gathered in my right hand and began to take the shape of a sword like vapor condensing.

The red blade lengthened, wrapping itself around a black core.

A word appeared in my mind like it was being punched into a typewriter.

Blazer Blade

Fire burst out from my right hand. The magnificent double-edged sword was finished, glowing with red heat .

You couldn't call it a longsword, but in my hands it looked like a longer than average blade.

Amazi~ng, coo~ol... by the way turn me back.

"Moke——"

One of the soldiers came down out of the air with a pose like a jumping frog.

My voice was frozen, so I swung the sword. The enemy took a diagonal slash to the chest, and with a small explosion evaporated into dust.

"Mokeh"

“Mokee~~~~~~”

“Aagh! These...!!”

I was attacked without a moment of pause and made a sudden horizontal sweep. The soldiers, cut in half, vanished one after another.

With no hesitation - with even less hesitation than before, attacks began to come all at once from the earth and sky.

“De... yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahh!!”

I slashed at them, the spinning sword wrapped in fire that traveled with the sword’s pressure, spreading out like a burst from a flamethrower.

The figures all in black attacked four ways, eight ways, and evaporated without even having time to scream.

“Hah... hah...”

The reptile monster, alone now, was trembling all over .

"I'm nailed to this spot, I can't move... The sword like lightning and the twintails dancing in the sky... I was sure that I was lost in heaven!!"

"You really are lost! Stop, that's creepy!!"

The monster was overcome with emotion. Tears were flowing from his eyes.

I'm the one who wants to cry.

"Haaah, haah, twintails..."

"Wha...!?"

Desire was swirling around the monster like a vortex. He stuck out his hands and came at me like a zombie.

He was different from the one-kick soldiers before. In many ways.

"Those twintails... Could you pinch them between your thumb and index finger and give my cheeks a few slaps, pechi pechi...!!"

Wide eyes, the blood pulsing in them. Rough, thick breaths. And with the tip of his lips stained with drool, the monster came at me.

A dread second to none rushing through me and a weak scream I'd never heard from myself even once before.

"Kyaa—!!"

I fell on my butt, letting the sword drop.

"Haah, haah, twintails..."

I can't stand to look at this.

Is that right... is this what I look like.

Were guys who like twintails all like this? Would someone who didn't know me think of me as his accomplice? Was this how other people saw me?

...If nobody approves of me, will I become warped too?

"Shit, it's because there are things like you that...!"

Clutching my head and trembling, I curled up into a ball.

My memories flickered around me like shadows from a lantern.

The times when I had a passionate talk with someone about twintails.

Or when they might not have known them well, but they knew what they were.

There's not a single one of them who didn't start to look suspicious.

What's wrong with insisting on the kind of hairstyle you like, I always thought... but was this kind of monster what they were seeing?

I was pretending that I was confident and didn't care what anyone thought, but maybe I was really feeling guilty about my love of twintails...?

Sou-ji! Get a hold of yourself! You're the one who said you were going to save them, what are you doing!!

"...Ah...!!"

At Aika's words I came back to reality.

You were bragging earlier how important twintails were to you, you even grabbed my... you grabbed the front of a girl's shirt and lifted her up. Now that you became a twintail you're scared!? Pull yourself together!

She said 'the front of her shirt,' but Souji-sama, you just grabbed her collar in one smooth motion, didn't you? There were no obstacles to intercept you, were there? Hahaha

I'm sorry I stopped you before... I can't look at that monster anymore either, that creep, don't worry about all the other stuff, just punch him hard!

...Don't, squeeze like a washcloth... Please let go of my obstacles!!

If you can't do anything now, then that's the thing that will make you his accomplice! If you feel guilty about your usual self, then when it's time to act, do it right!

It hurts, ow ow ow ow ow!!

"...Aika...!"

Aika's precise speech, as if she could see straight through me. A feeling rose in my heart like sunlight breaking through clouds.

I thought I heard a voice rising in pain, but my mind had already become one with the space around it.

And I'm not confused about what I am anymore.

I'm an idiot.

What Aika says is right. After shaking her off and coming into the battle, what am I doing.

I have been given the power to protect what I love and respect and I'm completely losing it because of my own small worries.

Come to think of it, back when I was a kid, when I was fighting Aika and I had that old man training me, he beat that into my head a lot. You have a lot of idle thoughts, you have to empty your heart - that kind of thing.

Let your heart fill the space... let idle thoughts loose.

Let your heart—

"You are tearing off my breaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaasts!!"

"...Uooooooooooooooooooooh!!"

For the first time in my life my whole mind is concentrated on this fight. But there's something, some noise that I can't imagine comes from a creature of this world, that's pulling me away and making it really hard to focus, so I let a scream out and began to run.

Nothing else than the scream now.

"Hmm!?"

"I'll pechi-pechi you! Get your face out here!!"

I lifted the Blazer Blade above my head.

"Oooh!"

For the first time my slash was blocked.

But on the left cheek of the monster that hadn't been touched, a burn like the mark of a sword appeared, running in a single horizontal line.

"You're... Haah!!"

The monster screamed and a beam of light flashed out of the palm of his hand.

But the beam evaporated as soon as it touched my body without disturbing my twintails a millimeter. I didn't feel anything either.

"Hmmn!?"

A combat suit that was so thin, except at my hips, and arms and legs and other places covered by the angular armor, that it didn't hold me back at all - the Tailgear.

You could see its true worth in the light that surrounded me.

"...Photon Absorber... Is that what this is."

An explanation echoed in my head.

The ultimate defensive film takes the absorbed energy of motion - in other words, impact - and kills it completely by controlling and intercepting it at the molecular level.

This is also the reason why the head, which should be protected as much as possible, is exposed. No attack will hit the Tailgear as long as the whole body is covered in light, and that makes it an invincible weapon.

"Hmph... You're a terrifying little kid! For the first time in many days my soldier's spirit is roaring! I am Lizard Guildy, the leader of the Ultima Guil raid squadron! I fight in the belief that a man's heart should beat even stronger at the sight of a girl who is holding a doll! Tell me your name, at least, if nothing else!!"

"—TailRed!!"

I said it so naturally that I was surprised. It felt as though the suit itself was telling me what to say.

The moment I had broken through, it had started calling to my heart.

An irrepressible power was pulsing in my whole body.

"...I asked for your real name!!"

"It's fine... If you shout a disturbing belief like that at the top of your lungs then I don't need someone like you to remember my name!"

"That's mysterious! You believe more or less the same thing, don't you?"

"Don't put me together with you!"

"It's obvious at a glance! If you weren't one who loves twintails more than anything else, you wouldn't be shining like that!"

"You know your stuff, don't you... Fine, I shine all the brighter because of my love for twintails - go ahead and remember that!!"

"That runs counter to what we want, then, doesn't it... For us, we love twintails even more when we have our hands on them! Hnnnn... hmph!!"

The countless spines on Lizard Guildy's back separated and lifted high into the sky.

A thin belt of light seemed to bind the spines and his body together.

And one by one as if they had a mind of their own they came down to attack.

"Yaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!"

I started to cut all of them down with the Blazer Blade.

The burning spines one after another started to hiss like bombs, and after they hit they blew away part of the asphalt.

"Hnnnnn...!!"

They came flying even faster. I could dodge them by the width of a hair and they'd still spin around quickly and pursue me like guided missiles.

My eyesight for moving objects was much better because of the Tailgear, but even for my improved vision the complicated orbits were a threat.

"Twoearle! Will everything be okay even when I defeat this guy? What will happen to the twintails!?"

The twintails that were stolen...? The Elements... they're stored in that ring for an hour or so, I believe! So ignore that guy! Defeat him and break the ring and they'll go back! ...I believe!!

"All right!"

I had been a little frightened about the thing Aika called me about... no, incredibly frightened, but I would stick with my first decision to rescue the president's, and everyone else's twintails.

"Magnificent! I will not forget this day if I live for ever! My apologies, but I'd like to take a photograph as a souvenir! Rest your head on my shoulder like this, and hold a stuffed..."

"Shut uuuuu-p!"

I shortened the distance with a single bound and with my left hand wreathed in fire, I punched him hard.

His face mushed in and a large amount of blood came out of his nose.

"Agh, aaugh... No, no help for it... I was trying hard to keep from hurting your face or your twintails, but you're going to have to resign yourself to a certain amount of damage!!"

The muscles under Lizard Guildy's steel scales bulged out still more.

He must be gathering all of his strength for an attack.

I stood straight in front of him, preparing for the worst .

But isn't there... It's going to be dangerous for the girls lying around here if we keep fighting in this flashy way!

At that moment the vivid image of a deep red pillar of fire floated into my mind.

"—Aura Pillar...? This, then!"

It's like a help file was included and I can search through it by thinking. Very nice of her.

Fire burst out of the tip of the Blazer Blade and swelled to the size of a basketball. With all my strength I swung the sword up and let it fly loose.

"What is this!?"

The ball of fire exploded right in front of Lizard Guildy, and drawing a spiral encircled his body as its track took the shape of a pillar.

"N, m, nor can I move!"

It certainly is a barrier that binds the enemy. So this is the Aura Pillar!

“Uooooooooooh!!”

Keeping my eyes on Lizard Guildy, I began to run.

The sword that I was holding started to change shape, responding to my spirit. The hilt and ornamental piece unfolded, and the lines that ran through the sword like the veins of a leaf began to flash violently.

Fire shot from the blade shining with red heat, stretching it to almost twice its length.

The edge slipped through the barrier that was holding him. And straight down in the direction it was already going, it cut Lizard Guildy in a single sweep from the crown of his head.

Yes, Grand Blazer is definitely a final move... The trails of flame ran into the sky.

“Gwoaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!”

A heat wave like a bubble popping. Lizard Guildy screamed in agony. Arcs of electricity were coming off him.

“He, hehahahaha... Magnificent... To perish with a twintail brushing gently against my cheek... How can I have any regrets! This is the end I always dreamed of as a child!!”

“Wait, hey!!”

The Aura Pillar swelled out suddenly to three times its size.

“Farewell——!!”

Lizard Guildy, holding his belief next to his heart to his last moment, detonated in a tremendous explosion which couldn’t be compared to the others, and dispersed on the wind —

“Don’t vanish with a dying vision like thaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat!!”

After there was only silence.

I looked out on the devastated parking lot, although you could hardly tell that's what it was anymore.

On the other hand, Grand Blazer had scorched the ground a little, but there weren't many more traces of my fight. The unbelievable flare and impact had done almost no damage to the surroundings.

I saw Aura Pillar as something like a support technique for capturing the enemy, but maybe it's to keep damage from explosions down to a minimum.

"Hup~"

I cut the drifting huge metal ring in half without any particularly strong feelings.

As if it had completed its task, the sword I was holding turned into flame and dissolved into the air.

The ring broke into tiny pieces and the light inside it became sparks that broke into streams flowing down into the unconscious girls one by one.

As I saw their hairstyles returning properly to twintails, I was hit by a sense of exhaustion. I wasn't sure if I might fall on my back.

I had been lost in the fight, but was I really able to save these girls... was I really able to save twintails?

There was a small diamond-shaped stone glittering light green on the ground. I picked it up.

<Doll>

The word came into my mind. As I held it the armor piece on my left hand slid open and sucked it in.

"...Huh, this is another power of the Tailgear?"

"—Um."

"!"

I almost jumped when someone called me from behind .

The president was awake and looking at me in wonder with her twintails fluttering behind her. They were covered in soot but had not lost their nobility.

She was making a token effort to hold the hem of her torn skirt together with her hand.

"I would like to... thank you very much for saving me."

"Ah, hahaha, for what? I'm just a guy, no girl who happened to be passing through!"

I don't think anyone could believe that when I'm dressed like this but I have to come up with something.

"No, um, that is... I woke up midway through the fight."

"What?....."

"Yo, you fought wonderfully! ... You're still only small, but you're gallant... and strong ... I was... so moved!"

"_____!!"

This is bad. I thought everyone was unconscious.

The president is also really young-looking, but right now I don't look like any more than an elementary schooler.

And that child was carrying a sword and fighting with monsters... how can you come up with an explanation for that situation.

“Excuse me... How in the world did you...!”

“A, a, I’m an ally of justice! Now, please get, out of here quickly!”

I’m really feeling how bad I am at ad-lib, as Aika pointed out an hour ago.

“I would like to thank you very much for saving me!! Will we meet again!?”

“You’ll see me again, as long as you love twintails.”

Bowing deeply to me, the president left at a half-run.

Thank goodness, she didn’t investigate too much.

For something on the spur of the moment, that line wasn’t bad. Although I was just trying to get through this .

“Young mistreessss!!”

A limousine cut diagonally across the parking lot at a reckless speed like it was slashing the lot in half and stopped, leaving a huge tire mark. Maids, a lot of maids, jumped out from inside and rushed over to the president.

A few of the girls who had fainted also began to wake up. The maids... probably at the orders of the president, broke the task up and began to care for them. It didn't seem like there was any place for me anymore.

Afterward were the girls' parents and families, maybe. .. adults, now free, also came running one by one.

The president might have seen me when I was screaming in terror... but I had rescued everyone safely, so I'd like her to forget about it.

"Whew..."

I shifted my line of sight to the front.

I can see myself reflected in the side mirror of a car.

"....."

It's a little young, but the way I look is certainly exactly what I was dreaming of, my ideal twintails.

I felt heat coming into my cheeks and shook my head desperately.

If I keep looking at myself, happiness and unease will hit me simultaneously.

Sirens started to come into earshot. Of course, the police and ambulances and things would be coming.

As the thread of tension snapped I felt dizzy.

Hugging a wall to avoid people's eyes, as I went around a corner I saw Aika and Twoearle, who had been waiting for me.

"It's finally over..."

My last strength drained out and I fell back on the ground.

The transformation was cancelled, and I was wrapped in a cocoon of light and returned to my original shape.

Thank God I didn't stay like that my whole life...

"Sou-ji!"

Aika ran over to me and caught me in her arms, and out of relief, maybe, I flickered in and out of consciousness.

"It is a pity for you to have your head pressed against the ground. Please come here, my chest has proper cushions."

"It's my chest, not the ground!!"

"—For a woman it is only called a chest once it has begun to puff out. That is, the area below your neck is referred to as the ground, Aika-san."

"Why don't you kiss the ground, dumbaaaaaaass!!"

Aika caught the back of Twoearle's head with an eagle grip and shoved her into the sidewalk.

"Nooo, stooooop, it's my first kiiiiiiiss!!"

I want to fall asleep feeling like I made everything turn out okay, but I still hear screaming. Come on, guys.

As though guided by fate I dived into the maelstrom of war.

And the curtain closed on TailRed's first battle.

Chapter 2: The lady molester from another dimension

The light was already fading. We made it back home from the scene of the fight without questions, thanks to recognition jamming. Now the real problem began.

"Once we're inside the house... ssh. Mom's home."

Normally I'd come through the cafe door without any hesitation, but today that's not a good idea. We went around to the back. I turned the key in the lock with unnecessary care.

"Thanks for having me ove~... ooguuh."

Acting all of a sudden like a grade school boy coming over to play at her friend's house, Twoearle took a punch in the solar plexus from Aika. She seems fluent in Japanese, but I guess a word like "ssh" isn't part of her vocabulary.

"Oh, Sou-chan~?"

Mom's voice came from the kitchen.

There shouldn't be anything suspicious about coming in the back door, but the guilt over bringing along an unknown girl made me tense up.

"Uh, yeah, I'm home!!"

"I'm here, it's me, Aika! Thanks for having me over!"

Aika helped me out by deliberately saying her name, and maybe thanks to that, mom called back oka~y! in her usual tone of voice.

She exchanged glances with me and went into the kitchen. I went up the stairs to my room, taking care to keep my mom from noticing Twoearle.

As soon as we walked through the door she started to say "nervous nervous, nervous nervous," which bothered me, but before long Aika came up with black tea, and the three of us took chairs and sat around my table.

Sure enough, Twoearle was looking restlessly around.

"...You're pretty lively considering I pounded you into the dirt earlier, aren't you."

"Haha, ridiculous. A woman who is bothered by a little thing like that would hardly be suitable. After this I expect Souji-sama to pound something even more amazing int—"

She started to say something, but trailed off in the middle of her sentence, maybe because Aika had moved into another knifehand strike pose. I looked down once more at the bracelet on my right hand and then at the girl sitting opposite me.

"You can explain this, right. The power you gave me, and the identity of those deviants."

"...I, I am sorry. This is the first time I have ever been in a boy's room... ehehe."

"Wait. The first thing you're going to explain to me is why I turn into a girl!!"

"What should I do... My heart's beating fast, he's going to hear it..."

"You know, what you're saying isn't matching up at all ?"

Aika put in an amazed comeback. The gears of conversation weren't turning an inch. And I think I was hearing things that shouldn't have been said out loud in the first place.

"...U~m."

Twoearle turned to look carefully at Aika next to her, and made a quiet noise.

"Aika-san. You are tired, are you not. Please go back to your house and rest."

She had a smile like an angel but a closing time, get lost aura was floating around her.

"Nope. I would like to hear it too."

Aika answered flatly, a vein standing out on her forehead.

...What is this atmosphere. I don't know why, but I'm suddenly feeling a chill.

"Aika, I will send you a letter after we are done, so please go home and take a nice rest tonight. Incidentally,

it seems that in this country they have the phrase ‘read the atmosphere, stupid.’ I was quite interested to learn that.”

“Shut up and start talking!!”

“Eaaaaaaah, that’s a contradictiooon”

Aika had grabbed her collar and was shaking it with her neck snapping back and forth like a baby whose muscles weren’t developed yet. It looked like a dangerous situation. I hastily jumped in to stop them.

“Calm down, Aika. I’m sure this is just Twoearle’s way of showing her consideration.”

“Ha ha... Souji-sama, you understand me perfectly, do you not? I’m no match for you...”

Even though we were in my room, Twoearle’s hair sparkled and fluttered in an unseen wind.

It’s like a widescreen event CG, it looks like it’s shining like the climactic scene of a game. What kind of game is this.

"Hey, Souji, is there a nice weapon in your room? Like a hammer or axe, something like that."

"No, of course there isn't, and you're a girl, so you should choose a weapon that doesn't depend so much on your muscles!!"

A giant weapon that relies on arm strength to promise a fatal wound. That's not a nice weapon, those would put her on ice.

Twoearle cleared her throat and, "I apologize. I think I have gotten ahead of myself."

She didn't reply to Aika's suspicious "how?" but continued.

"Allow me to explain, from beginning to end. First, the Tailgear."

"Right, that's the first thing. Why I become a girl."

Twoearle took a scrap of paper out of her pocket and unfolded it into a huge liquid crystal terminal. The creases had vanished. I'm getting excited at all these little bits of overtechnology.

In the middle of the screen was a complete chart of the Tailgear. Lines were drawn to each piece of the armor, and descriptions filled up the rest of the space.

Overview of the parts of the Tailgear

Manufacturer: Twoearle (B90 W57 H86 Equipment user has the right to confirm with the naked eye and/or body)

【T】 An anti-Elemerian strength-amplification weapon created by user Elemera resonation with a Twintail Element as the core. Not limited to ground combat, it can operate equally well in deep sea or the vacuum of space. A mere 0.01 seconds pass between the beginning of the transformation and the completion of the weapon, and even during that time enemy attacks are held at

bay by an unfolding shield, the Photon Cocoon.

【P】 A piece that covers the neck. Deploys Imagine Chaff, the recognition jamming force. It also strengthens vision and hearing to the degree that the equipment user can see and even hear events taking place 20 kilometers away.

【F】 A hair ornament-model device. Creates a weapon in response to the rising Elemera of the equipment user.

【P】 An extremely flexible metal which covers the whole body, it is the raw material of the Tailgear. It can boast hardness over 80 times that of diamond but is as light on the body and easy to move in as a set of clothes

. The Photon Veil disassembles and absorbs the user’s clothing, so transformation and cancellation occur smoothly .

【S】 A piece that covers the hand from the wrist to the fingertips. It strengthens the force of the equipment user’s grip several hundred times, and the punching power becomes over 100 tons.

【S】 A piece from the lower leg down to the ankle . It strengthens the equipment user’s walking power several hundred times , and the kicking power over 150 tons.

【T】 After the transformation, it regulates the Tailgear’s power output. Also, it is connected to the base’s

main computer and transmits the operating condition with a negligible time lag of 0.001 seconds.

【E】 Elemera Orb Conversion Device connected to the left armpiece. Special equipment that draws out the power of an Elemera Orb. The power of the Orb is reified, and charges every part of the Tailgear.

【E】 Opening from the hip, an amplifier apparatus that focuses and releases Elemera. Supplies power to movement and incarnated weapons. When all energy is released, it protects against counter-currents so that the equipment user will not be wounded by backlash from the power they have raised to its limit.

【E】

【 P 】 A defensive membrane of spiritual energy that surrounds the Tailgear. It can take a force corresponding to a 90-ton physical impact and distribute and mitigate it before it reaches the Tailgear. Also, when fighting in space, it plays the role of a radiation shield.

“That was looooooooooooooooooooooooooong!!”

Twoearle had finished her excited explanation and was bowled over by an iron punch from an equally excited Aika.

“Every little bit of it is so stupid, but... here! A one-hundred-ton punch would blow over a building!”

“Uuuh... For those numbers I was trying to give it a chuu-ni feeling, so I just wrote whatever I thought looked good... You can do it if you try to, though, I think.”

Twoearle got up, rubbing her cheek. She's reckless and tough, this girl.

She already has the technology of instantaneous teleportation, so even if the suit did have a destructive force of 100 tons or so, it wouldn't really be surprising...

"What's this Force Rivon supposed to be? It's just a ribbon piece, why is there a V in there, it pisses me off!!"

"What do you mean? Boys of a certain age love the letter V! It makes their fighting spirit roar! I guess after all this is an area that a psychotic girl who doesn't know anything about boys wouldn't be able to understand, isn't it!"

"I... W, wh, wh, hey, so are you saying you have so much experience with guys!?"

"That's very rude. I am not necessarily a virgin, do not put me together with a bitch like you."

Aika heaved Twoearle up onto her back and delivered a blow to her spine, with an amazing technique that even I hadn't seen before.

For the time being let's say this is just a very radical version of girls' talk.

I'm surprised myself at how serene I am. It could be this wild dance of special moves designed to destroy the human body, radical in another sense... well, in the original sense.

That aside, Twoearle was right.

How do I put it... there are a lot of things here that appeal to a man's instincts. When I look at it my mouth opens a little.

"But now that I look at it again, it's actually awesome."

With everything amplified several hundred times or several thousand times it wouldn't be impossible to break through the atmosphere sometime when you were running.

"Twoearle, the Excellion Shorts part is blank, but they have some kind of function, right? This... here, right on the swimsuit... part..."

"Er, to put it simply, when the fight goes on for a long time and you want to go to the bathroom, this can break it down to the molecular level and scatter it into the atmosphere for you, but... it seemed like it would spoil the chuu-ni a little, so I wasn't sure if I should mention it. "

I didn't hear it - the true function of this piece of cloth with the glittering title of Excellion.

I will also leave this space blank in my heart hereafter.

"Ah... wait, wait! So you explained the layout of the Tailgear, but what about my body! Explain the part about becoming a girl first!!"

"What, you want me to teach you about a girl's body? Hoho, that's right, I resigned myself to this. When I agreed to come home with a man who worked himself up in a fight, I knew in my heart that this would probably"

"Tell us already, I'm not going to hold back for much longer!!"

"My elbow can bend farther noooow!!"

Wrestling fairly well with her words too, Aika was ruthlessly trying to break... no, she was crushing the girl's slender arm.

...So up until now you've been holding back?

Looking at this brutal joint technique I don't think Aika needed a weapon.

"You become a little girl when you put on the Tailgear because —— that's what I like! Is there something wrong with that!?"

"You're suddenly serious!?"

Twoearle rose bravely to her full height as if she weren't afraid of anyone.

Of course, I was also lost for words.

"Also, if you look like a little girl, it invites carelessness from the enemy, and you draw their attention. It is the best style to use against those guys."

"We have little white lies in our part of the world too, Twoearle."

But you know, if she'd choked down the first thing she said and just used the second explanation, I would have been able to barely accept it. For some reason her personal tastes were seriously interfering with what she wanted to say and exposing her.

"I understand. I can't agree with this, but there is a good reason, so I guess I can't help it."

"Of course, right? Little girls are so cute, right!!"

No, not just interfering, I'm almost certain her tastes were her main reason, but... I'm scared to ask.

"Now. I want to ask about that monster too, but first, Twoearle, could you tell me about yourself?"

"Yes, I've been waaiting for you!! Please take a good look in all the corners!!"

She was about to strip her white coat off with a splendid gesture and probably a little jacket play when Aika's body blow landed.

"Tempura donnnn"

With a mysterious moan, Twoearle collapsed on the floor. These guys are already perfectly in sync...?

“I... I am not a human of this world.... I came here from another world.”

That makes sense. I thought that we couldn’t communicate, our gears weren’t meeting up, but she wasn’t just a foreigner, she was from another world.

The cultural wall between worlds is incredibly thick, huh.

“Please do not misunderstand me, though. I said another world, but to be exact it is like a parallel dimension. It is not so different from here. The name of the country is different, but in this world, I would be Japanese.”

““Really!?””

A rare harmony with Aika. Now I can’t imagine what she means by “not so different.”

“So let’s talk about what that monster wanted first... the energy of the mind called Elemera.”

I've broken the explanation Twoearle gave down into my own words.

Not planets, not universes, but an uncountable number of "worlds" lie parallel to each other. Although no one can see it, they are as close together as if they were on either side of a door. As if they were the points on a backgammon board.

Originally, just like our universe, these worlds didn't have the slightest idea that there were others, and still less were they able to travel between dimensions. It was impossible for a human race that had only barely managed to make it to the moon.

But there are extremely rare worlds with levels of scientific achievement that are literally in another dimension. The energy of the heart, Elemera, was born on a world like that.

The energy requirements of the technology they were developing became a problem, and they eventually

arrived at a way to make use of the power in the human heart. That became like their electricity, their fossil fuel, their mineral wealth.

They made the vague and doubtful thing called ‘heart’ solid and concrete, and it gave birth to infinite possibility .

The core of the Tailgear, the target of those monsters, Elemera - element energy. It mediates every thought and desire a person has, and exists without limit.

Not just taste, but professions, features of the body, fields of expertise... a person doesn’t necessarily just have one element, and some have many.

“The enemy today was shouting, ‘find the twintails,’ or, ‘catch little girls with dolls,’ were they not? That is what they meant by it.”

I remembered the monsters’ mad little party vividly.

“That is what is called a Twintail Element. The fact that they have twintails. And their love for them and attachment to them. Those ingredients condense into mental energy. Elemera is the foundation everyone has in their heart, the source of their vitality. If it is lost... for

example, if a person lost their Twintail Element, that person would never in their life be able to wear twintails again!”

“In their whole life!?”

“Yes. Even if they tried to tie them, they would not be able to. The blank left by a lost element will rule the body for eternity.”

A chill ran up my spine.

So if I had screwed up back there, those girls wouldn’t have been able to wear twintails again in their life, even if they had wanted to.

“S, something that crazy is possible...” Aika was touching her own hair protectively.

“Can you get that much power just because someone likes twintails!?”

“The force of the mind is vast, stronger than any fuel or chemical energy. Even when you are exercising, there is a remarkable difference in effectiveness depending on whether you are bored or you concentrate, right? That is also your mental energy turning into driving force.”

"That's true. 'The greatest way to train is to polish your mind'... grandpa said that to me a lot too."

"Yeah."

I know that in the fight today I was also remembering her grandfather's words. I'm worried that his leading successor pays absolutely no attention to his wisdom, though.

"Aika, do you by any chance have an interest in martial arts?"

"Yeah, my grandpa ran a martial arts school."

"That makes sense... I may need to start carrying a gun to protect myself, I suppose."

"Go ahead. In that case I can kill you without hesitation."

"....."

Twoearle froze at the straight-faced reply. I've been spending my days with a girl who says, "At last I can get serious," when someone pulls a gun on her. My eyes are getting red.

"Tha - that aside. Unaided, a person's ability to concentrate is more or less their limit, no matter how much practice or training they have... but this energy, Elemera, goes beyond that. The conversion is much more efficient when you materialize it and do not just burn it internally, and you obtain a source of refined energy far beyond existing methods of generating power. That is what makes it possible for the Tailgear to be the strongest weapon."

Twoearle dropped her gaze to my right arm.

"I believe you recovered a stone after the battle."

I remembered the stone that I had picked up without thinking. A light green stone with a mysterious glow. Maybe because I had it in mind, the stone popped out of the bracelet and rolled into the palm of my hand.

Although it was clearly not organic, I felt a quickening in it as though alive.

"That is a crystallized element, called an Elemera Orb."

"Elemera Orb, huh?... But why something like twintails? I understand the part about a strong mental power, but, you know, in that case... it should be love for your family, or friendship. Aren't there lots of things like that?"

"You could say that those have a splendid strength, but look at it more carefully. The love for family that intelligent beings possess is to some extent instinct. It is the bedrock of the mind, not the motivation for life but life itself. And in your life, what do you throw yourself into, what do you long for? What are you charmed by, what do you charm others with? That is where you will find the spiritual power of the individual, will you not?"

"Throwing your life into twintails..."

Aika gave me an amazed, sidelong glance.

"What, something bad about that!? Actually it was really powerful, wasn't it!!"

"Yes. The Twintail Element has the highest order of power even among the Elemera. And that is also what

allowed me to make use of its power to create a battle suit. The name 'Tailgear' does not only come from the ' tail' in 'twintail,' but from the 'tale' of fantasy!"

"...Are you serious, twintails are the strongest...!?"

"There is no reason why a strong element must have an impressive title. Elements which make you go 'huh?' and tilt your head for a second are often more powerful, enough to shock you."

My life is not some kind of mistake.

This might be an exaggeration, but I think maybe my whole life has led to this day.

"The Tailgear is a weapon built with a Twintail Element at its core. Therefore, its use is of course limited to those with a strong Twintail Element. A boy who has never himself worn twintails would ordinarily not be expected to have that much power. But in this world, the possessor of the strongest Twintail Element is... Souji-sama, it is you——"

"So I was the chosen one!!"

"Yes, you are the chosen one! ...Um~ by the way, the explanation has gotten a little boring, so would you mind switching off the lights?"

Twoearle ran her fingers along the floor as if she were playing scales on a piano and lifted her hand to touch my thigh. Aika threw a very bulky monthly shonen magazine that had been lying on the floor of my room and intercepted it.

"Ooow!"

Those thousand-odd pages weren't just for show. Twoearle puffed on her finger.

"You said those monsters were looking for Elemera. Did they come from another world too?"

"Yes. Those guys are —"

A monster that looked like a bug brought its fist down bang! on the table.

"You say Lizard Guildy was defeated!? By a human!!"

"Nonsense, how is that possible!!"

"Mere negligence cannot explain that! What is this!!"

A grand hall, all dull grey. Creatures of richly individual shape were gathered at a round table like executives holding a meeting in a conference room. This was the secret base of the Ultima Guil.

Neither air nor sea nor the solid earth knowing, a crystal of science and the occult. A base and a mother ship. And also the colony where the monsters lived.

It wasn't hidden somewhere. It wasn't even visible to the human eye. A temple... or a better word would be a sanctuary. Now, of course, it was anchored in Souji's world.

As the commanding officer of the raid squadron, Lizard Guildy had departed in high spirits. But he hadn't been out for a day before he was defeated together with several dozen of the Ultiroids. The report sent a huge shock through his fellows.

"Hmmmn, what is this! Our preliminary investigations of this world showed the level of civilization was low and the element level higher than anything we've seen

before, an ideal environment! That was what we decided, wasn't it!!"

Angry roars rose from all corners of the room, all calm lost.

The Elemerians.

The brilliant flourishing of Elemera had been cut short in one stroke by an unknown form of life. They were outside of the evolutionary chain of all other living things, crystals of mental energy with an ego and a body. As it were, the life of Elemera itself, so they had been given that name.

Humans are organic matter, and so we take in other plants and animals to survive. With bodies of mental energy, Elemerians have to live by — of course, absorbing that same mental energy.

Like blood donation, it had become an iron rule that Elemera must never be extracted in a quantity large enough to hurt someone. But the Elemerians sucked it all out in an instant. They built up advanced knowledge

unnoticed and finally learned how to form a conspiracy, and they gathered together into a grand organization and pulled the fangs out of humanity.

That organization was the Ultima Guil, the evil army that had already crossed through many worlds and was now in the world where Souji lived.

"Si-ilence!!"

A monster in the shape of a dragon broke through the mayhem with a roar. The hall suddenly went quiet as if it had been hit by cold water.

"Commander! Dra - Drag Guildy!"

Their commander gave off a fierce fighting aura even seated in his chair. His status was clearly well above that of the other figures in the hall.

"We who trained Lizard Guildy know well his strength. What this tells us is that there is a hidden soldier with enough power to defeat him."

"A soldier..."

"Watch. It died in an instant, but one of our Ultiroids broadcast this recorded image to us."

On a large monitor at the front of the room, a picture of the transformed Souji appeared.

Oooohh..., a simultaneous cry of wonder.

"Lizard Guildy was defeated by her... hmmmm, if it was those twintails then I can understand it."

"What beauty... what love... this must be the Guardian of this world!"

"One cannot call this anything other than a coincidence, the work of the gods. All we knew about the level of civilization in advance was the surface layer, so even if there are one or two warriors that transcend this world's logic and limits, it is not so mysterious. We have faced warriors who oppose us many times before, have we not."

"...But up until now the strong enemies we have been fighting have all fallen into our ... aoooooh, what is this!?"

The muscular soldiers stood up out of their chairs with a tremendous noise. Broken into six parts, the monitor was showing the young warrior from all directions. A moment when her twintails were in lively motion had been captured, just like a blog review of a figurine.

Oh my.

Hmm.

Oh, this is.

They were supposed to be mourning Lizard Guildy but had become judges in a twintails show.

“More than anything, this young child... I sense in her fate both dread and destiny. These are not just twintails, this is not just a young girl. I feel a profound mystery here, don’t you?”

Drag Guildy folded his arms and curled his upper lip back. His eyes were missing nothing as he watched the screen, with a gleam of wit in them that didn’t match his bold and grim appearance.

"Well, what shall it be? Will we tuck our tail between our legs and leave for another world?"

With a faint smile, he cast his eyes over the company. The answer was obvious, and so the only response was a fearless grin from them all.

"What are you saying, sir? With twintails like that before us, to run to some trash world?"

"Heh... It looks like I've found the place I'm going to die."

"Then nothing has changed. We will take those twintails and the Elemera of this world together!!"

Eaaaaaaaaahh...!!

Each and every one of them was a soldier so gallant and resolute that it was almost stifling.

"This is a happy accident, isn't it? An formidable enemy comes out of nowhere and blocks our path - when that happens, a military man's blood starts roaring even harder!"

Drag Guildy let out a ringing laugh with a look rising on his face that mixed joy and madness.

This is the Ultima Guil.

Callous monsters who cross between dimensions and have made humanity their enemy —— we have the general idea of them for now.

“Your world was destroyed, Twoearle!?”

I was amazed at what she casually said after she was done talking about the monsters.

“All of the people of my world had their Elemera stolen away by the Ultima Guil. Looking at the world from far away, you might not notice a single difference... but it was a lonely world of people who were somehow inanimate, with no ambition. There can be no invasion so quiet and cruel.”

In other words, what they destroyed was the heart of the world — what they conquered was people's spirit, or more like...

"In our world, the technology of Elemera had not yet been established, so they were an evil beyond human knowledge. There was no way to fight them. On top of that, you remember, you two thought at first that the girls were not hurt. It is hard to understand the real depth of an injury to Elemera. We dragged our feet when we should have opposed them with all our strength."

"...Twoearle..."

Aika who had been optimistic back then hung her head in agreement.

A world where no one can meddle with the things they love, the things they pour their heart into. When I imagine it, I shiver.

"Definitely. They wouldn't launch a serious global-scale counteroffensive against a monster that said stupid stuff like that, either, right."

“Because I saw injury early, I conducted research on their technology before they started to seriously gather Elemera. Thanks to that, not all of my Elemera was stolen from me, but...”

You didn’t have enough to protect the world?

“Twoearle, you’re a researcher? To analyse a technology your world didn’t yet have, that’s amazing. You must be ridiculously smart. And you look like you’re about as old as we are.”

“My age is a secret!”

Twoearle put a finger to her lip and winked. Maybe sick of her girlish attitude, Aika bent her eyebrows up in a 八 shape like a punk in a leather jacket.

“If once stolen, the absorbed Elemera will never return. So it is a revenge that will bear no fruit, but... I would like to use my power to stop them from invading, at least.”

“All right! It’s a huge blessing for us that our interests coincide, but I’ll do it, to strike at the enemies of your

world, and to keep our own world safe. Thank you for letting me use this power."

"Yes! Please use it any way you want! This body!!"

Aika lashed out like a whip to grab Twoearle, who had a triumphant smile on her face as if she didn't feel like it was enough to just let me use the Tailgear, and floored her with a back suplex.

I can see their underpants perfectly from where I'm sitting but, why is it, why is it that even when they do this I'm not feeling anything erotic about these two.

"Come to think of it, Twoearle, isn't there anyone else who can use the Tailgear?"

"I cannot mass-produce them, but... there is just one more. And I have found someone who is qualified to use it already."

"Really!? In that case, we..."

"But... it is not a person with a just spirit like you, Souji-sama. I don't know if person is even the right word for them. An inhuman barbarian, heartless, a wild beast stained through to their soul with violence. If I gave such

a mighty power to that demon, even supposing they could use it, I think they might become a greater threat to Earth than the Ultima Guil are."

Twoearle poured out her heart with a bitter expression .

"Is that so? There are villains like that among people who like twintails, that's kind of sad..."

"Hmm. Even though they have Elemera, they're a demon with no heart. That's odd."

"Yes. I could not have believed it myself until I saw it with my own eyes. Actually, I still can't believe it."

In any case, we can't expect reinforcements. It looks like I have to fight by myself for now or it'll be hopeless.

"Naturally, I want to stop Souji from fighting in a war, but if he's the only one that can fight, I guess there's nothing I can do... But your safety is your first priority, all right?"

"Yeah, I know!"

"You don't know! Listen, if you're the greatest thing to them, you're going to become their number one target! What if you lose, what do you think they're going to do to you!?"

"Aika, you're so gloomy... Elemerians do not have any particular interest in the human bo... lime juice!!"

Another back suplex. Before long the floor's going to wear out.

"Your face is bright red, is it not! You are imagining something like tentacles!!"

"Sh, shut up shut up!! If they like that kind of thing, or if they have an element like that..."

Aika, waving her hands like an angry kid, abruptly stopped with a serious look.

"...Hey. You said that all the world's Elemera was stolen, right? Then how did the Tailgear..."

"Oh my, it's already this late!"

Twoearle looked somewhat unnaturally at the clock hanging on the wall behind her and clapped her hands. Aika had started to say something, but was interrupted by her badly delivered line and made another 八 with her eyebrows.

“I think that it would be a good idea to go home and rest before long, Aika. Are you not tired?”

“No, I’m just fine. Why are you trying to get me to go home by myself?”

“I thought you might be tired...”

Endless.

Twoearle felt around in the pockets of her white coat, and stood up suddenly with a smirk.

“Souji-sama, I am going to go make some more tea.”

“No, I can’t let you do that, you’re a guest - hey.”

I tried to get up but she stopped me, put the cups on the tray, and left the room hastily.

"...Hey, wait a second, Twoearle! My mom's in the kitche...!!"

"I have made some more."

"So fast!?"

I was about to hurry out of the room and follow her, but the door opened again after only seconds. Did she use the teleportation pen again? For some reason she had just one cup and was holding it carefully.

There was steam rising from it, certainly, but... did she really make more.

No, it's not steam, there are bubbles rising from the unnaturally boiling water, or a piece of wrapping paper had fallen out of the pocket she was using, or it looked like she had just finished emptying the contents, or is that what's going on or isn't it, which one is it, it's this mood where a chill is running up my spine again.

"Well, please go ahead, Aika."

"Uh, okay...?"

You've been shouting all this time, your throat is probably dry.

Aika accepted it obediently and was about to raise the cup to her lips...

"..."

Her hand trembled and she stopped short as if she had felt the presence of a ghost. I couldn't help but be drawn to the source of the gaze either. When I looked tactfully out of the corner of my eye at Twoearle, she was sta-ring at Aika with her eyes wide open like an owl.

"Now, drink," her look said.

"...Twoearle, try a little bit of this."

Aika handed back the cup.

"No, I have already had enough."

"Just a sip is fine, though."

"No, no."

"Please, drink."

"Absolutely not."

"...You put something in this, didn't you, you fucker!!"

Aika brandished the cup and threw the tea in Twoearle's face.

"Nyuonmuuuu!!"

"Aaah —— what are you doing, Aika!! That's terrible!! "

When I see the way Twoearle is holding her mouth firmly closed, I feel absolutely sure she did put a sleeping pill or something in there. Why is she trying this hard to get Aika to go away!?

"Sou-ji, you can't put any confidence in this woman! She absolutely has some kind of plot!!"

Uh, you know, I'm not going to believe everything Twoearle says all of a sudden either, but usually, when I try to think carefully about it, I get interrupted by screaming. What am I supposed to do!

"Calling it a plot is too harsh, I think."

"So - Souji... Why are you putting this much trust in her! Is it because she has breasts!?"

Aika demanded an answer with tears in her eyes. Was she worrying about it that much? Maybe it would have been better to hold back the joke about her chest in that fight...

I pulled a hand towel out of the storage under my bed.

"Use this towel, Twoearle. I'm going to bring some ice from downstairs."

"That is all right, it was not really that hot."

"It looked pretty hot!?"

I started to wipe Twoearle's face carefully with the towel.

"...M~m... m~ fu..."

She's bringing her face unnaturally close to me. Watching us, Aika started to groan quietly, and her body was shaking. Feelings of guilt were naturally welling up within her, I guess?

"I don't think you'll have a burn... Aika, even if she came from another world, she's just a normal human being. If you do the kind of tsukkomi you usually do on me, she'll get hurt."

I should have said that back when we met. How many punches has she taken already?

"Oh, that's right."

Twoearle, lying back in my arms as I was wiping her face, smiled as if she had realized something and suddenly began to wriggle again.

"It is hot... it is hot inside my clothes too. Please wipe me there..."

She took off her white coat. The plump breasts under her thin untrustworthy underwear shook as if they were about to burst.

"Eeeh...!? No, that is, uh, definitely... I'll ask Aika."

"If Aika did it, she might pour more boiling water in, I am worried."

"I'm not gonna!!"

"That is a lie! You were trying to see if you could twist off my breasts earlier!!"

"They stayed on in the end, so it's fine, isn't it?"

I think I can turn a blind eye to this conversation. I feel unspeakable fear responding in me, a long way beyond any of the scenes of destruction that I saw today.

"Let me have that!!"

As I broke out in a cold sweat, Aika took the chance and grabbed the towel from me.

"Nuryaaa!!"

Aika threw all her strength into scrubbing Twoearle's chest with the towel to the point that it was more like rubdown therapy.

"The heat of friction is cutting down my breaaaaasts!!"

"You should get cut down to the bone, people like you !!"

It's a little late to be saying this, but that first impression of Twoearle has certainly been smashed to atoms.

"Let, let's talk about exactly how to operate the Tailgear later... I will leave the details for tomorrow or later, so let us stop here, all right..."

Twoearle made this suggestion while rubbing her chest. (By the way, without learning anything she said " Souji-sama, could you rub my chest" and took an open-palm blow from Aika on her chin.)

"Yeah, okay."

To be honest, there are still many things I haven't heard enough about, but I decided to agree with her since Aika has been in a really bad mood this whole time. I've asked the main things, and this should be enough for today. And I think this conversation is going to cut down Twoearle's life if it goes on too long.

"Um... sorry. Throwing the tea on you. I went too far there."

Aika seemed to be unwilling, but she apologized.

"It is all right. After all, I am stronger than a normal human. Incidentally, I think the other threats to my life may also have gone a bit too far."

"Sorry, all right!!"

Stronger. I hadn't expected to hear that word, and doubt rose into my mind at it. What was it that gave Twoearle that strength? She said that her goal was revenge, but I can't feel even a hint of tragedy in her.

No, it wasn't the kind of "invasion" that left everything a scorched earth, but even when she was talking about her old world, even when she was explaining her enemy the Elemerians, there didn't seem to be even a bit of anger or sadness or resentment in her.

If that's because she was putting a happy face on it, I think she really is strong.

"Umm~."

"Whoa!"

Twoearle rubbed her hands together in front of my thighs, and gave me a look pregnant with meaning that was mixed with long, feverish breaths.

"So, then, Souji-sama. I also want to be able to back you up in a fight, so, from now on, I would like us to do everything together as much as possible. For efficiency's sake, even eating and sleeping... um, the essential one of those is sleeping..."

She closed her mouth there. A look as sharp as a bed of nails had been fired from behind me.

"Eating and sleeping... wait, you mean here?"

"Yes, so would you allow me to borrow a room? As long as I can sleep it will be enough."

"Huh!?"

"If you are going to say 'we don't have any rooms to lend to someone like you,' then even a toilet will be fine, so... Hhh, haah..."

That would be even more inconvenient. But Twoearle is breathing louder for some reason.

“No, there’s not really anyone here but me and my mom, and we have extra rooms, so it’s fine, but... can’t you stay at Aika’s house? You’re both girls, and there’s something better about that.”

Aika’s parents are overseas for a job right now, so she’s living together with her older sister. As long as her sister is okay with it, I think that would be better, but...

“It is better with a boy and a girl... er, what I mean is, there are a number of considerations.”

“Even Aika doesn’t normally throw tea on people. Do you?”

“Of course I don’t! How savage do you think I am!!”

She wants to say I’m being ridiculous, but looking back at the amount of violence in not even an entire afternoon, she doesn’t make so unpersuasive an objection .

"But I am going to support you, Souji-sama, so it is more efficient if you let me live here. The assassins of the Ultima Guil are going to be coming again and again after this, you know!"

"U~mm, but..."

That was something that I didn't have an instant reply to. First of all, how should I explain this to mom?

"My mom is really like a kid in some ways. So, you know, if this incident leaks out, I'm worried she'll stick her nose in."

She lives her life jumping into the next exciting thing - for example, her half-hearted management of the cafe. If I let her know that I'm going to take care of a girl, she won 't worry about it or scold me, she is the master of taking nothing seriously. I'm scared to talk to her about this. I can see too clearly what would happen.

"Another urgent matter is the establishment of a base."

"A base—"

Aika was taken aback at the jump in vocabulary. Come to think of it, there was something about that in the chart for the Tailgear.

“Due to the tremendous scale of the enemy, the system that supports Souji-sama must be flawless. Mission support, monitoring of the combat, maintenance of all kinds... it will also act as a research laboratory, so the base has to have a suitable size.”

“I see.”

I agreed with her. The value of support had been more than proven in the first battle today.

“And so, I would like you to allow me to dig a space underneath your house. The ground under this house is also more suitable.”

“Space under my house!? I’m not sure it will be okay if there’s an earthquake or something.”

“...Wait, the ground? But I live right next door...”

Aika’s also extremely worried. We’re such close neighbours that we’re practically connected, after all.

"Please do not worry. I will finish it tonight."

Twoearle said something so ridiculous that people throughout the world working in the construction industry are going to do an old-fashioned spit take and blow out their tea.

"That makes it even harder to feel safe. What's that lightning-speed work! Our houses aren't just all going to sink into the ground, right?"

Twoearle shook her head gently and smiled sweetly.

"Aika, if you were living by yourself, I would not be unwilling even to demolish you and your house together with explosives, but I cannot cause trouble for your family."

"Why don't you get buried, hey, why don't you get buried!"

Aika is shoving Twoearle's head into the floor with an angry look on her face, on the verge of caving in the floorboards. She's so beautiful that you feel ashamed just to look at her, but it looks like Aika's gotten totally used to that. She doesn't hold back when she scolds her.

"Twoearle. I'll persuade my mom one way or another, so... could you help me think of a good reason why we're going to live together? I absolutely don't want anything about the Tailgear and the stuff about the Ultima Guil to come out."

"Leave that to me. I can think of any number of lies like that. I am Seek Time=Zero Twoearle, I need no thinking time whatsoever."

She hit her chest proudly with a thump. Another sketchy name in the ruby.

"Don't act proud! And don't shake your breasts!!"

Aika shot an "I still haven't wiped it enough?" glare at that chest as if it had killed her father.

"How about this? I am your classmate, studying abroad from a foreign country."

"I see, a homestay line or something?"

"No, I was lost in an unfamiliar city, and you tricked and kidnapped me and locked me up. See, I'm desperately trying to run away, so it makes perfect sense for me to dig a hole!"

"Does that make sense!!"

Twoearle took a punch to the liver.

"...I'll persuade her on my own, okay?"

"Yeah. That's a better idea. Go do it before she gets back up."

I'm sorry. I can't watch this.

She's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen in my life, and she's rolling on the floor in agony in a way I've never seen outside of a fighting manga. It could easily overturn my whole view of life to look directly at this spectacle.

I went out into the hallway and breathed a big sigh of resignation.

This is the first time I've ever told my mom a lie this huge. It's a kind of tension I've never tasted before.

The homestay line is the safest one, I think.

I'm not sure how well I'll be able to explain it all afterward, but I am not good at lying. Ad-libbing doesn't work either, as I've had rubbed in my face twice today.

"I'll hide the parts I need to, and I'll explain the truth as much as I can afterward. That's all I can do..."

My mom was leaning on the with her arms folded when I came down the stairs.

"—— I hope you didn't mind me listening in!"

"Don't listen to——!!"

"Oh my."

I pulled my mom into the living room.

"Do you not care about your own son's privacy?!!"

"You brought a girl other than Aika-chan along with you. I was sure there would be some interesting developments!!"

I rubbed my forehead and groaned. The whole thing was already revealed back when we walked in. I shouldn

't have worried about eyewitnesses at the scene, I should have been on maximum alert after I came home.

"...How much did you hear?! What did you hear?!!"

"I heard a girl screaming over and over. Muhuhu, things were pretty rough."

Ah, she heard almost the whole thing. That's already almost the whole thing. By the way, all the violence without exception was the young girl from next door.

"You said you were the ones who settled the incident that was on the news?"

"Why do you believe that!? Don't you even have a little doubt!?"

We believe it because we saw it with our own eyes and then fought in it, but somehow she believes the whole thing just from eavesdropping on us.

My mother looked up at the ceiling and took a deep breath.

"So at last, this day has come..."

I stepped back in shock at the serious expression on my mother's face.

This calmness, the speed of adaptation... there was only one conclusion I could come to.

"...It can't be, mom, you've already known for a long time... I was going to be chosen as the wearer of the Tailgear...!!"

"Umm, I don't know anything about it, but..."

Complete denial with the same serious face.

"Why were you acting like you knew!? Or actually, you didn't hear anything we talked about!!"

"Monsters called Elemerians in the Ultima Guil attacked this world to obtain Elemera, the mental energy of humans, and you fight them using a suit called the Tailgear, Sou-chan?"

"Or you understand all of it, or which one!?"

That's impressive understanding considering she was eavesdropping.

"...This was my dream, you know."

My mother raised her face to heaven with lips tinged with drool and an expression of ecstasy on her face.

"Souji, your mother's chuunibyou only got worse as she grew up. I passed my days dreaming of becoming a heroine who protected the world, and finally, without ever getting my wish, I became a mother of one. But, listen, I passed that dream down through the umbilical cord and I entrusted it to you."

"What are you doing to your kid before he's even born !!"

With a little effort this could probably have become a moving, unforgettable conversation between parent and child, but my mom was talking about the errors of her youth.

"And your late father, he was also ——— a terminal chuunibyou patient."

"What did you need that pause for?! ...So Dad had a bad case of chuunibyou too..."

My eyes feel itchy, and not because I'm about to cry.

"We fell in love in an instant, and threw our chuuni back and forth at each other to our hearts' content, wishing together. Dad also wanted very, very much to be a hero. He'd make stories where he became a hero in great detail, and he let me hear about them! At the end, he'd even tell me how he felt when he powered up and things like that."

"Stop— I think I'm about to run into the front hall and smash his portrait!!"

I pressed my hands against my skull as if I were under assault by ultrasonic waves. Just listening to these memories feels like it's blocking the blood vessels in my brain.

"But your mother's greatest dream was to meet a young man from the enemy organization and fall in love. And on the other hand, your father was dreaming of the exact opposite situation, so we fought with each other on countless occasions! Actually, several times we decided to break up."

English is not my strong point at all, but right now I think I could fluently say "Ｏ !"

Someone who tries to put on a bracelet that transforms you into a young girl when they ask to share a table seems normal.

My parents, on countless occasions, fought and broke up for reasons as irrational as any in the world - it's too heavy for the heart of a boy in adolescence. It's very difficult to take.

"It was the winter of our third year in university. Your heartbroken mother said, "Let's try a setting where a boy and girl who are always at each others' throats are drawn to each other," as a concession, but your father insisted that it had to be forbidden love with the female commander of the enemy forces (wearing body armor like a swimsuit) and refused to compromise. Even our relationship can only go so far... that's about the time I started to resign myself to that. ...Sou-chan. I realized that you were in my belly around..."

Ectoplasm is coming out of my mouth. I can't push it back in, my hands have no strength.

Dating each other with messed up fantasies, and then a shotgun marriage. This kind of parents. What do I do, what am I supposed to do with these frustrated feelings.

Something even heavier than the peace of the planet Earth is settling onto my shoulders.

“After that we got along with each other so well that it seemed unbelievable... heh heh, we often said that our child was the tie between us.”

That might have been true in my mother’s relationship , but when I hear that right now I feel pain like a spike being driven through my head!

“There’s one more important thing I have to say. This is a good time, I think.”

“Huh?”

“You know, Souji... you’re the oldest child, so did you ever wonder why your name has the character ‘two’ in it ?”

A deep sadness dwelled in my mother’s eyes.

Certainly I’ve wondered, but in the end I never asked about it.

Why is she talking about that now?

"...Ah... Did I have some older brother or sister that you expected to come before me!?"

Mom shook her head.

"It came from the shared feelings of your father and I. ' Ah, the real grade two of middle school was the most fun time,' we said. It was the nostalgia we felt for those happy days gone by that made us put the letter 'two' in grade two in your name!..."

[Unavoidable TL note: The literal meaning of chuunibyou is "grade-two-of-middle-school syndrome," or eighth grade syndrome. Miharu and her husband loved the way they felt that year so much that they put the "two" in grade two into Souji's name.]

"Couldn't you have taken that secret to the grave!? I'm going to be a delinquent! If they had to hear interesting secrets of their birth one after another like this, any normal adolescent human would be a delinquent already the next day!"

"I wanted to make it something more impressive, really. Like Meteo or Ultimate. But this was another compromise between the two of us - we finally chose a kanji that we both liked."

"Sorry, Souji is good."

I sunk to my knees at last. I nearly wore the name of a self-conscious enemy organization...

Hey, is it possible that my, the part of me that people think is a bit of a pain, really is a hereditary thing passed down through the umbilical cord?

The sound of a floorboard creaking made me hold my breath.

"Um~, is it all right?"

"Wai... Twoearle, you can't come yet!"

Twoearle was peeking into the living room, half hiding behind the door. She is already very lively even though she took a straight punch to the liver some minutes ago.

"Hehe, you let me listen in on your conversation, Twoearle-chan!"

"Actually, I have also been taking the opportunity to listen in."

I'm out of reactions.

That funny story about my birth, on a level that could win a prize if you submitted it to a variety program - I guess she heard that too. I could die of agony from the memory.

"Honored mother... I have already spoken about this with Souji-sama, but I would like to live here, if you would be so kind."

"Sure, I've got no reason to say no!"

"Also, I would like to build a research laboratory underground if possible, and use it as a starting point for backup."

"Get it done right away. A hundred kilometers deep if you like. I always wanted a secret base. Let me see it once in a while, okay?"

"Of course."

"Heeeeeyy—!?"

The conversation is advancing bewilderingly fast. She's even been allowed to break the limits on excavation depth in the private property regulations, it's nuts.

"Also, honored mother, could I manage to have you say 'Oh, that's a problem, we don't have any spare futons . That's right, you can just sleep together in Souji's bed!'? "

"...Twoearle-chan, that's good. You are really good! For someone like you to come to us from an alternate universe makes me really happy! Please think of this place as your own home! ...But, oh, that's a problem, we don't have any spare futons. That's right, you can just sleep together in Souji's bed!"

The hell are you playing it back perfectly like a voice recorder! That's a woman who devoted her whole youth to chuunibyou for you. Apparently mom can also use Seek Time=Zero.

I'm being washed in some kind of aura coming off the two of them, mom and Twoearle, and it looks to me like they're being pulled together by something like magnetic force. ...Sympathy?

Twoearle must have a severe case of chuunibyou also, I guess. She puts Vs into words, too.

This is scary, now what am I going to do, I'm asking you a favor, so, just once, let me cry without worrying about what other people might think.

"And so I don't have any problem with Twoearle staying at our house. Think of this as your own home, including Sou-chan's room, and use it without reservation."

"Thank you very much, Mother (in law). It will mainly be Souji-sama's room that I think of as my house."

What's this? They're making fun of me, I'm pretty sure that's what's going on.

If I make comebacks one by one it'll be me who loses.

I bowed my head. I had reached a degree of enlightenment.

"...Hehe, instead, would you mind making Sou-chan into a proper man sometime?"

"Oh, no, Mother (in law), please don't be so reserved. Why do you not say 'tonight?'"

"Twoearle-chan...!!"

"Mother (in law)...!!"

The two hugged each other for dear life.

Aika came down the stairs at a run, raising dust. "Wai. .. Aunt Miharu, come over here, please!"

"My my, mother is very popular."

"And also, you, don't think "in law" when you say mother!"

"How did you know!?"

Aika went right past Twoearle without even remembering to punch her. ...Maybe I should cry now while I can... silently, with tears streaming down my face.

Aika took Souji's mom・ Miharu into a neighbouring room and closed the door. She really didn't want to be heard, opening the door a crack to check Souji and then shutting it again right away.

"Aunt Miharu! Think about this carefully! If you make him live together with a woman like that, Souji's virtue will be in danger!"

"I couldn't ask for more, could I? Suddenly a beautiful girl comes to live with the hero, and things turn in an erotic direction. It's just like that day, that hour, the dream I painted in my mind back then! Even if she pushes Souji down, it won't bother me at all."

"And you still call yourself his mother!!"

It looks like she also painted a detailed love comedy in her youth of chuuni fantasy, but... I wonder why a woman had a dream with a development like that?

"But, it's normal for a parent to want her son to find a girlfriend?"

Miharu gave her a probing look.

"......That..... that might be true, but....."

A bashful Aika poking her fingers together.

"Or else, you, Aika-chan...?"

Aika hastily waved her hand. "It's not like I... I'm just worried about Souji as his childhood friend..."

"Ye~s, if that girl hadn't appeared, I wanted to look at you a little more carefully."

"Wh, what are you saying?"

"Twoearle-chan has a good look in her eyes. They're the eyes of a woman who wants to eat a virgin, an aroused woman with no principles!"

"Even as a joke, is that something you say about your guest!?"

It made even Aika feel pity; she tried to defend her.

"A guest... no! Twoearle-chan is already a fine member of our family."

The door opened with a soft sound. Twoearle came in, her eyes wet with tears.

“Mother (in law)...”

She gripped both of Miharu’s hands tightly, and something passed between their eyes.

“Huh? Why is there an emotional atmosphere!?”

“I am sorry, mother, but I am not a woman without principles. I have one principle: Souji-sama.”

“You should deny the rest of it too!!”

“That is right. It’s romance for a woman to lose all her principles when it comes to a single man!”

Has a day come when in just a few minutes the air is filled with such unromantic words? Why has a girl her age gotten to the point where her eyes brim with happy tears when mom calls her a virgin eater? Just like Souji, Aika seems to have been assaulted by a violent headache.

Although she was holding her forehead with her head lowered, Aika’s lips were pressed hard together. Miharu

still thinks she's just worried about Souji, and no, she still didn't trust her.

(The way she's acting, some of it is joking, but...)

Twoearle was holding hands with Miharu and turning around in circles as Aika stared with distrustful eyes.

(There are a lot of crucial things she's holding out of focus. Like in a world where Elemera had been hunted to exhaustion, how did she get the Twintail Element for the core of the Tailgear?)

The Tailgear, armor that lets you fight without covering your face. Aika felt that its manufacturer had hidden her own face behind a heavy mask.

(I know there's something important she's hiding...)

Aika had stressed it to the point of stubbornness as she was about to head home.

"Souji, from today on, sleep with your door locked."

"Why?"

"Who cares! If you don't, I'll weld it shut from outside!!"

That's ridiculous, it's a wooden door, I was thinking, but I understood it as Aika's way of saying that I should be more careful about crime prevention. Without objecting any further, I nodded obediently, and I went obediently to bed that night. But.

Mohyan.

Memepoppo, puryon.

Kyopo-. Kyopo-.

Ryoromuminminminmohe-.

"....."

I can't sleep.

I hardly feel awake, but my eyes have opened on their own.

It's fine, leave it to me, Twoearle had said.

I'm not worried about something like digging a hole in the basement of the house. Even taking present-day Japan as an example, construction techniques have reached the point where they look like magic to an ordinary person, as you can see from the subways stretching through the earth under Tokyo like the mesh of a net.

Twoearle has come from a world where scientific techniques are far more advanced, so even though she's doing rush construction, I don't think there's much reason to worry about a cave-in. I understand that, and I'm lying in bed like this, but...

No matter how I put them into text, it seems like you'll doubt my sense of sound - what in the world are these weird construction noises?

"Ah! ...Dangerous, dangerous, I was almost about to break through to the planetary core..."

I shouldn't be able to hear her distant voice, but it was as clear as if it were directly assaulting my brain.

Let's sleep.

I have to sleep.

I have to leave these odd sounds and words on the other side of a dream.

Before much time had passed, suddenly the sounds stopped. She said she'd get it done in one night so I thought she'd have to work hard tonight, but it looks like she's finished. Or the planetary core - no, let's not think about it.

My exposure to the vortex of weird sound made even the ticking of the second hand of the wall clock sounded louder than usual when it stopped.

"Whew..."

I should be terribly tired, but for some reason I'm wide awake and can't sleep. I raised my upper body out of bed and opened the curtains of the window.

The sky was full of stars.

As I watched them rising into the night sky I had a poetic thought, out of character.

That girl is just like a fragment that has fallen from one of those stars.

Zip.

A human face with bloodshot eyes fell into sight, facing the other way up. Its wide eyes met mine straight on as it passed the window.

“Gwaa————————!!”

“Aahwaa————————!!”

I fell off the bed in surprise but the girl on the other side of the window didn’t have it that easy.

“Hawawa, Souji-sama...”

“What are you doing, Twoearle!!”

Getting back on my bed, I hurried to pull up Twoearle, who got her hand on the windowframe in the nick of time. Well, first, my nomination of “fragment of a star” will probably lose the election without much debate.

...She had been doing some Sunday carpentry on the planetary engineering level, but despite that she had a nice smell. Something like peaches.

“I, I am inexcusably sorry, it looks as though I fell asleep while I was working and... while I was half asleep I walked up to the roof at some point, and the instant I realized where I was, my foot carelessly slipped and I fell .”

Seek Time=Zero. Certainly the thinking time is extremely close to zero, but isn’t the roughness of the contents a fatal flaw?

“Er... If that’s really true, there is room for careful thought about our mutual position.”

“No, no, no, you can use any position you want and I will be fine! Strength, direction, time doesn’t matter, whatever, however, wherever you come from, by all means!!”

I feel like a misunderstanding has crept in somewhere, but if she tells me I can take whatever position I want, I want her to let me put a little distance between us, so that ’s how we’ll do it.

“Hey, Sou-ji, what are you doing! There was a huge noise , but.....!!”

The sound of a window being shoved open.

Wearing light blue pajamas, Aika bent forward out of her window, her face changing color.

The house next door... my room and Aika’s are right across, and the gap between them is so small that you can put one foot on each window, but tonight that convenience has backfired.

“...Ah?”

Twoearle was sitting on the bed just the way I had pulled her up. We were facing each other.

“What are you doing in theeere!!”

With a violent four-footed leap, Aika entered my room with a dynamic sorry for butting in and with the same force sent Twoearle flying.

"Eh..... me... why me, in a love comedy it is the guy who gets punch... higaah!!"

Under Aika's rush Twoearle floated into the air hit by hit.

Together with the dull sounds of impact.

The brilliant kicks and punches continued without a break.

And on top of that, the illusion of faint blue afterimages on the arc of motion.

This is the first time I've seen a human being do that outside of a fighting game.

"What are these about, these breasts! They piss me off! They piss me off!!"

"Do not worry. I myself used to be very small once. But I reached an ordinary size after two or three years. By the way, if you do not stop sooner or later I will di..."

"What do you mean average!? There's nothing average about them -mune!!"

Ah, it's pathetically moving the way she's turned her overflowing anger into a verbal tic.

"Even if I am from another world, human gh..."

They're so close to me, but they're far away.

"...Heeey."

Even calling to them didn't stop them, so I gave up on all of it and pulled the futon over my head.

Yougetsu Academy suspended its first hour of classes, and the whole school was gathered in the gymnasium. Of course, about the incident yesterday.

A solemn atmosphere ruled by silence.

The fact that I couldn't see any odd students out who were yawning and wishing for the assembly to end soon seemed odd in itself.

Only one thing broke the quiet: the steps of the student council president, Shindou Erina, walking up to the podium.

Standing at it, she swept her gaze across the room to cover every student. Just like peasants waiting for a verdict from the South Magistrate of Edo, they kept silent , waiting for her to speak.

Several of her maids stood like special police in the shadows behind her, maybe reflecting on their failure yesterday. They weren't worrying about the way things looked any more.

"Everyone. As you are aware, the town faced a heretofore unprecedented danger yesterday, when it was assaulted by a group of mysterious monsters."

Certainly, it's beyond unprecedented. The monsters with their clear intention to collect twintails are in some sense even more of a shock than an invasion from outer space.

"In fact, I happened to be at the site, and was one of the targets."

"Wh...!!"

"What's that!"

The students suddenly started to murmur. They were trying to keep quiet for the sake of the president, but even so, when their anger rose up and overflowed, they couldn't hold it back.

Her twintails were swaying with the motions of her body and hands, so I felt the tension rise too.

"Unforgivable!!"

"Even if it kills me, I'm going to try and beat them!"

"Hey, quick, someone strap dynamite to my body! Shut up, do it right now!"

Male and female students were shouting without a pause, as angry as if it had happened to them personally, or rather angrier. The flame of anger ran through the students' bodies like a fuse, trying to turn the children of two thousand parents into insurgents.

If getting carried away like this is your school spirit, then just laugh and accept something small like my slip of the tongue yesterday!

"Your righteous anger makes me very happy. It is a wonderful thing for your hearts to ache for a stranger.

And on top of that, for someone like me who is so inexperienced as a leader."

She was short, so she was using a riser to reply. And yet still she was standing on tiptoes. I thought of a young girl stretching out as far as possible to write her answer on the blackboard.

That courage was another source of intoxication for her very well-trained dogs... rather, students.

"However, their aim was not me alone. Even in this room, there are several people who were targeted, I believe? And if we look outside of school there are even more girls who almost fell into the evil hands of the invaders."

Another burst of murmuring, but this time she intercepted it with a sharp "But!"

"As you can see, I stand here unharmed. There is still very little information on television, but I believe many of you have learned about it from the net or other places. At that place there appeared like the wind... a gallant fighter for justice, who was kind enough to save us!"

Her voice became a little sweeter in the middle. She sounded just like a princess, her heart burning for the one she loved.

.....A fighter for justice?

I felt an uncomfortable suspicion, and cold sweat ran down my spine.

"——That girl, that day, she stole my heart!!"

A loud and enthusiastic cheer rose up in response.

'I've been waiting for those words, President!!"

"I'm so glad... Although I've been saying 'a tiny girl with so much pride, so sexy,' honestly I feel hesitant. But if that's what the president says, I don't feel sad at all any more!!"

"This is bad... I do feel sad, but it's still sexy!!"

"The tiny little president has a tiny little ally of justice.. . is this the kindness of God? I feel like I understand something about the world!"

It was a cauldron of excitement. I was reminded of the scene you often see at the end of an action movie, when they find out that the operation was successful and a whole room of FBI agents wave their hands in the air and cheer.

One after another they say things that make me worry about the future of Japan, or the world.

Eh? Could it be that I got the president to fall in love with me?

But the one she likes is me as TailRed... as a little girl... eh?

“Students, behold!”

When the president raised her right hand, without a moment’s delay one of the maids set up a projector screen. A large image of a girl appeared on it.

“”””Ooooo—hh!!”””””

“Aaah!!”

The exact opposite of the cheers around me. Sure enough, what they had put up on the screen was me after

transformation. It's a perfect angle. Pictures like this have already leaked out here and there on the net, it seems like .

"Eee..."

It's frustrating, but... those are spectacular twintails...!! I can't keep myself from looking!!

Lined up with the president, it's a splendid view that is already rocking my heart.

A fierce power created by the harmony of two bodies in one, like being under the gaze of the two temple guardians that stand at the Niōmon.

It's probably because it resonates with the two beautiful tails of hair that are the foundation of the twintail.

"The Shindou family has decided to do everything in its power to support her! I ask everyone here, somehow, together with us, to aid the savior of the new era!"

The cheering became even louder.

A passionate gaze at the president, and TailRed's twintails.

Everyone is looking at... my twintails————

"Huh!?"

I felt my heart beating strangely fast in my chest for a reason it would not be a good idea to think about, and made a fist with my right hand and punched myself in the cheek.

The Shindou family had decided to support me, including even the president's mother, the director of Yougetsu Academy. Lots of the students adore the president, so the student body should agree almost without exception.

The whole school is behind me — but as someone who 's burdened with the job of turning into a little girl this isn't something like high school baseball, where I can be openly proud of the fact that every student is cheering me on.

Even though school has just started, I can't remember anything that's happening in class.

I'm overhearing bits of gossip from all over, and probably all of it is about me, TailRed.

The day went by, and my stomach continued to hurt.

At lunch, Aika came over to my seat carrying a bundle with a bento box in it.

"Hey, Souji, listen, after school..."

"Ah, sorry. I'm going home as soon as school ends, I promised to listen to the explanation of the Tailgear. And I need to let her show me the base, too."

I answered her quietly to keep from being heard.

"The rest from yesterday?"

"I'm just going to hear how to use it, so you don't have to come today."

"...Just you and her?"

"There's no one else, is there?"

It's possible Mom will insist on joining in from the start this time.

"—M, me too!!"

Aika banged the table with the water bottle she was holding.

"I want... to hear it too, so let me come."

"...Okay."

With that much force in her voice, that was all I could say.

It was the first day of normal class. It was too early for people to be having lunch with new friends they had made, so almost everyone in both the bento faction and the cafeteria faction was eating with the people they knew from middle school.

Aika has quite a few friends from back in middle school, but I don't even have one. I appreciate the fact that she's coming to see me at lunch like this.

Yeah, that's right.

We're always together like this. If Aika wants to, I'll let her hang out with me to the end.

"Ohh~, I haven't seen this picture before!!"

When I looked over at the happy group of guys that were gathered by the window, their eyes were rooted to a tablet that one of them was holding.

"I've decided! From now on, I am TailRed-tan's oniichan!!"

The lethal noise pierced my eardrum.

"Pffff—"

Without thinking I spit out the Fruits au Lait I was drinking.

"Wait a minute, Souji, don't get it on my face! Ugh, it's sticky..."

"So, sorry... I couldn't help it..."

It did bother me that the girls nearby were grinning for some reason as they listened to us, but the guys were a bigger problem. You could easily see even from here a bright red young girl... TailRed was on the screen, and on top of that, it looked like it was switching in a slideshow.

"It's all over the net now, isn't it...!!"

I took my head in my hands.

"When we go home today, why don't I get my hands on Twoearle and make her delete all the files that have gotten out? With her scientific ability, she should be able to do it."

"Listen, think of something that doesn't involve violence once in a while!"

As we whispered to each other, the guys were heating up even more.

"Really cute! Really cute! Really cute!"

I shuddered with chills. Ah, I was happy with the sight of all those people cheering for me, but when you look at them one by one this is what it feels like. It was the right decision not to give in to that strange feeling earlier.

“I was more into large breasts, but, you know... I’ve woken up.”

Woken up to what?

“Uhehe, she’s cute carrying that sword... I want her to cut me too.”

I will hit you as many thousand times with the flame blade as you want.

“Ah, man, I can’t take it anymore!!”

The owner of the tablet, no longer able to bear it, pursed his lips and leaned close to the screen.

“Aaaaaaah!!”

I suddenly grabbed Aika’s water bottle, and, although I didn’t even remember my classmate’s name, I took aim at his head and threw it. It hit barely in time, three centimeters before the kiss.

"Aaow! ...What the hell, Mitsuka!!"

"You should be ashamed of yourself, with such a little girl!!"

"Ah, if it's shame, I've already accepted it! And here I stand!!"

What kind of state of mind have you reached at this young age!

I tore at my scalp.

And yet this guy properly remembers what my name is! Ngh...

"...Hm-hu~m. Come to think of it, you like twintails so much that on the first day, you wanted to make a Twintail Club! You just want to keep TailRed-tan yourself!"

"Noooooooo!!"

I wanted to recover from my mistake on the first day and somehow live a quiet student life, but somehow, now that I'm in the high school section, everyone seems

to get sucked into the flow far more easily than I expected.

“I’m tired...”

The peace and quiet after school came with a pile of worries. My exhaustion was reaching its peak around the time I left, together with Aika as I had promised.

People in higher grades were crowded together on the walkway from the entrance to the school gate, enthusiastically welcoming the new students. But, whether the dark clouds gathering on my back were so thick that they could be seen or not, no one tried to talk to me.

I had a sudden thought as I was walking.

“You know, I wrote something like Twintail Club and left it undecided... what club should I join?“

“You’re not going to be fighting every day. When it comes to things like club life, just choose what you want like normal.”

Now that you say it, maybe you’re right.

"But I need to be prepared. Even today we don't know if they're going to show up again!"

"No way. After yesterday..."

I turned the corner with a bitter smile, and

To all humans who live on this Earth! We are the chosen soldiers of God from another dimension, the Ultima Guil!

"..."

"..."

We dropped our bags at the same time.

An enormous screen was floating in the sky.

Ladies and gentlemen, we do not intend to harm you! All we want is the light within your hearts! Resistance is useless! And if you don't resist, we guarantee your lives!

A monster that looked like a dragon sat in a show-off throne. With his legs crossed, he was making a speech.

Well, anyway it's a sight that would piss you off.

But it seems there are those of you who would bear arms against us. Resistance is useless! And if despite that, you dare resist, we will take up any challenge you give! Attack as you like!

"Is this a world broadcast!?"

The sound could be heard even from the houses in the residential area, on top of the razor-thin computer window that was floating in the sky.

With an unlikely thought I turned on my cellphone's 1seg. Sure enough the same image was being shown on every channel I switched to.

What is this, are they coming in on the whole broadcast spectrum!? So extreme...

"Those guys, are they really going to invade the whole Earth?!!"

A relaxed speech that said, resist as much as you want to.

If they have really foreseen all the military and scientific power humanity possesses when they say that, then what kind of power does their organization boast?

Twoearle had said that they had overthrown many “ worlds.” The meaning of her words became even deeper, and it made my legs sink under me.

Their invasion isn’t destructive.

A quiet conquest that steals the light from hearts, and the brilliance of life.

Yesterday’s fight was only really a skirmish. From now on, an overwhelming invasion would start, and the opponent would be the whole world.

Once that happens I’m not sure what just one person can do.

Hahaha, I am Turtle Guildy! As our leader Drag Guildy says, resistance is useless! I will be taking the light of the stars that shine in youth’s glittering sky... the Element of Bloomers!

The dragon had been replaced by a turtle-like monster, who was leaning back proudly.

But an Ultiroid approached apologetically from behind him and whispered into his ear.

...What!!? You say they hardly exist in this world any more! You have been fools, humans, you have been digging your own graves!!

The monster screamed, and humanity was speechless.

I can understand a hairstyle, but even your feelings about a half-extinct type of clothing can give you tremendous power? There are profound depths in this that I don't want to know about. Seriously, what in the world is Elemera.

Once, once is enough, I want to take a look at the faces of the people who loved bloomers enough to give birth to a thing like that.

Souji-sama, did you see that just now!?

Shortly thereafter a message came in from Twoearle. The high school the next town over - apparently still in bloomers - was being raided. Let's do it, then.

There are probably people who love bloomers so much that they can't get enough, the way I am for twintails, aren't there? Even if they have already started to go extinct on their own, I can't let them be stolen by the invaders.

"...Ta, tail on."

The activation words... the ones we'd decided on yesterday in a break in the conversation. I was still embarrassed about them, but...

Let's go.

To crush this terribly small-scale "world invasion."

"Welcome home~, Souji-samaan~"

When I opened the door of my room, my optic nerve was hit with enough peach-colored light to give me

vertigo. Twoearle had remodeled my bed to give it a canopy, and she greeted me wearing a negligee and wriggling a little.

"Hey, pervert."

"...Uh, what, Aika!? Why are you here? Souji-sama said he would be alone! This is not what he promised!!"

"What kind of eternal promise do you think he maaaaade!!"

With a kick, Aika broke a support of the canopy and flattened Twoearle under it.

Getting remodeled, getting broken... my bed's tragedies continue.

"...Uu, it's awful! It is too much! And you didn't come home quickly when the fight was over, so I've been lying like this for over an hour!"

"What's too much is your breasts!!"

Aika promised to listen to the explanation. If you were waiting, then you should have been waiting for both of us honestly at the cafe.

But I'm exhausted from the fight. I don't have the energy to think of comebacks or worry about the two of you. The turtle monster who kept saying "bloomers" was killed instantly, but I was surrounded by the students at the school where the fight happened and it was a lot of trouble to escape. That's most of the fatigue.

"I give up, I had people take so many pictures of me with their phones and things..."

"That the day would come when someone in a man's body would be scared of the words 'secret photographs on the net'..."

"U, uu... Twoearle, is there anything I can do at this point? Their declaration of war went out across all of Japan!"

I poured out my anxieties to Twoearle, who had crawled out from under the canopy.

It's terrifying not to feel any interest when a girl this beautiful is wearing a thin negligee.

"It was broadcast to almost the whole world at the same time, apparently. Every country is in a downroar at this point."

"...Well, certainly I don't know if it would cause an 'up 'roar, but..."

"Weren't they speaking Japanese, though?"

"It was merely converted into Japanese when we heard it. They are creatures of mental force, and the language they speak does not travel through the ears, it comes directly into the head."

I turned on the TV in my room. Just as she said, all over the world various speculations were in the air. It wasn't a high alert situation yet, but it seemed like the events that had happened in Japan had been accepted in every country, and countermeasures were being put together.

NASA was bearing the brunt of it, so it looked like they had mistaken them for aliens.

"Ah, it's getting to be a serious thing..."

I sank to the floor and buried my head in the bed.

"There is no need to worry. They only caused so much damage yesterday because we were not adequately prepared. From now on, if they appear, we can detect them right away."

I remembered what I saw yesterday. Twoearle continued in an even more cheerful voice as if she had noticed that anxiety.

"Basically, defeat them right away when they appear. If we are thorough with that stance, it will not be such a problem. If we hold damage to the minimum possible level, public interest should fade and there should not be an uproar."

"But with a loud proclamation of war like that, even the police and the army are going to come in, aren't they?"

"As I said yesterday... even if the army does appear, they cannot get through to the Elemerians. They are materializations of spirit. You have to have the Tailgear, which can convert that same spiritual energy into power."

"...Can I do this... an enemy who is attacking the whole world."

I had a painful feeling that I'd gotten myself into this without much thought. My feelings of wanting to protect haven't changed, but can I really keep fighting when it's just me on my own?

All it would take is for several of them to appear at different places and I'd be out. And that's something that they could put into practice at any time.

"That is what the secret underground base is for. Why not go and see it after this! We can already use the space leap equipment, so now it will only take a second even to get to the other side of the earth!"

That overtechnology too. If we weren't in this situation I think my eyes would be glittering with happiness, though. Maybe because Twoearle was worried about my sinking feelings —

"Zaisho-tto"

With a shout of encouragement as terrifying as any, she came and straddled my legs facing me.

“Two, Twoearle!?”

“Please get back up, Souji-sama, in various ways.”

With her hands behind her back and a suspicious smile, she touched my thighs. Her fingers crept upward, trying to keep me in suspense —

“What are you doing!!”

“Cedar woodware!!”

Aika’s fist hit her and blew her away, making a strange noise. She stuck into the wall head-first.

“...Ph... hahah”

Watching their argument, I couldn’t help but laugh.

It’s no use if all I do is worry. I have to trust Twoearle, and trust my Elemera. I’ll just fight as long as I can. This fight of mine is just beginning, after all, so —

“So, Souji... sama... that’s an ending flag ...”

I thought I could hear the brave words of a girl trying to hold back an ending herself.

Chapter 3: This makes us Twintails

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!”

That morning started with a scream.

I wasn't surprised to see the members of the Ultima Guil on television anymore, but now strange things were happening even in the news. They had put together a special about me, transformed. The picture that stood proudly beside the newscaster was much more vivid than the ones from two days ago. I knew it, they must have sent in the photos from yesterday...!!

Your name! Please tell me your name!!

Uh... It’s Tail, TailRed... whoa, wait!!

You're amazing! Let me call you oneesama, please!!

She's obviously an imouto! Haah haah, why don’t we play dress-up!!

Whooa, I’m leavi~ng, let me through—!!

A shot of me being crushed by schoolgirls. A young twintailed girl with tears in her eyes, and her hands and

feet flailing. A sight mixed with a tinge of madness, not appropriate for morning in the living room.

"They were even taking videos, whyy..."

I only said it in public for the first time yesterday, but the captions already said "TailRed."

She had already finished breakfast at her own home, but Aika was chewing on another piece of toast in my living room, as the look on her face became slowly more grim.

"...Souji, yesterday they were doing that stuff to you... your face was buried in schoolgirls' boobs... you aren't resisting at all, and... you were pretty happy...!!"

"That's what happens when they grab me, because of the height difference! I can hardly shake them off with my full strength when I have the Tailgear on, right!? What's going on, boys and girls both like me so much!!"

"There are boobs... and over here are boobs... you're kidding me, not a single one of them has a small chest! Listen, this is some trick of the Ultima Guil, right!?"

The anger rising in Aika was outside of my understanding as a guy. And precisely because I am a guy, I encouraged her in a manly way.

"Don't think of other people's breasts as your enemy, Aika! You have to fight yourself!!"

"And here's my fist!!"

I gurgled.

Of course my meaning wouldn't get through to her at all, and it's a refreshing dance of bloody spit starting at breakfast.

And the scene on the TV was also enough to make the one who was in it bleed from the mouth.

The majority of them were just poking at me and touching me and things, but there were girls with seriously dangerous expressions on their faces in there too. Even through the screen, I still feel like they're about to jump out and grab me. It might be a girl's school, but it's still bad when you look that way at someone who looks like she's in the lower grades of elementary school.

The video was probably taken by a bystander on their cellphone, and you can see the camera shake of an amateur on it, but it's very clear. I took modern phones too lightly.

I thought I could clean it all up in one shot, so it wouldn't matter even if there were spectators, but that naive plan has gone off the mark already.

It looks like they put them together as a set: the fight and, after that, the video of the schoolgirls playing with me. They're starting to get comfortable with the mysterious hero TailRed, in both a good and bad sense.

"Personally, I got a lot of respect for that little girl."

They were interviewing a man in a suit with sunglasses and dreadlocks. It said he was a staff member of the girls' school. There was no one like that there yesterday, and even considering that he is a fake, make the quality just a little higher, please.

"The Metropolitan Police are continuing to gather information regarding this girl, and they —"

"Why! Leave me alone! Investigate the Ultima Guil!!"

It's amazing how carefree you can be when war was declared on Earth yesterday!

"You're very cute, TailRed-chan ♪"

"Shut uu――――――――――――――――――――――p!!"

Mom relaxed on the sofa and drank tea with a light heart. It's an hour of glory for her son and *daughter*. She must be having strong feelings as a parent.

Another notch on the meter to the start of my rebellious years.

"Souji-sama, Souji-sama, look at this, please, there are collection blogs and wikis, fan sites and speculation pages for TailRed! It is a hot topic on the net too!"

Twoearle ran over to me holding a notebook PC in one hand, with a smile on her face.

"I've only transformed twice! What? What's with this lineup!!"

What are they collecting, what are they wiki-ing. All I can do is cry.

I wanted to do all of this quietly, but Japan, the whole world, is dragging me onto the stage. The topic's coming into full bloom on foreign websites too. They're already making translation pages for them, and there are comments like "The Japanese are living in the future, aren't they."

...If possible, I want to return to the past.

Twoearle was waiting respectfully on my mother, who had thrown her apron aside like a cape.

".....Twoearle-chan. Sou-chan still appears to be a virgin, but..."

"It shames me to show my face, lord."

"I am very lenient, but I do not have the compassion to forgive three or four failures in a row..."

"Haa.....! I will do it tonight, without fail!!"

What, I can't hear them that well, but are they pretending to be some evil organization...?

I'm happy that your dream finally came true after fifteen years, mom.

The two embracing in high spirits. Hot tears ran down a woman's, no, a man's cheeks.

"Aaah..."

"Are, are you okay, Souji?"

With all of this, I was completely worn out by the time we were heading for school.

"I was prepared for some of this, but I can't believe the amount of force behind it... I don't know what's going to happen to me anymore."

Anxieties about the future, different from yesterday.

"Well, it's a world-class news scoop. It's fine, it's better than nothing but tedious news like politicians screwing around or someone being arrested."

"Sure, maybe, but they were clearly putting most of the attention on TailRed!"

I can't understand why their eyes are on the hero alone and not on the invaders. And she's a little girl, too. ...No, maybe it's because she's a little girl...

It's a silver lining on this dark cloud that the scale of the invasion is relatively mild, but aren't you being way too complacent about the peace of this country?

"You know, that secret base she made has an amazing stench of chuuni. It really feels like a crystal of super-science. Like there's pointless dials stuck on the walls and stuff."

"Oh, yeah. And for some reason she built the elevator entrance inside the cafe..."

The grand opening of the secret underground base had been later that night. Mom's excitement had been terrible , but even Aika seemed to have been pulled in while she was insulting it.

The main room would be the foundation of battle, with a satellite monitoring system. And she had installed a spaceleap catapult (there was a long English name but I 'm shortening it) so that we could reach the battle in a split second.

The limit of the transfer pen is a few tens of kilometers at most, but this one covers almost the whole surface of the Earth. She really made it in just one night...

"Well, last night even Twoearle was docile, and that base is there to protect the Earth, so I guess there's not much we can do."

By the way, I don't think Aika saw it, but I snuck a look at the base's innermost room and trembled with fear .

Tables with construction plans scattered on them. Machines in the process of being built. It was the arms development room.

And among uncountable formulae and letters on the room's monitor, I was barely able to make out the dreadful words, "ANTI-AIKA SYSTEM—"

Aika, it looks like the grudge against you is steadily growing...!

I was ragged even on my way to school and wanted to take a nice rest at home, but —

"—Why do you keep faithfully showing up every single day one at a time, you bastaaards!!"

Just as I reached home, I got a message that an Elemerian had appeared and jumped out from the underground base. The timing was so exquisite that it made me wonder if they were watching me. I felt a little afraid at how they had perfected the villain template in just three days.

If this is part of their strategy, it's working like a charm .

"Aaah... at last we meet, TailRed!!"

Yet another monster is standing before me in an irritating pose.

I was already worried about simultaneous dispatch to multiple locations. But I didn't expect small forces at regular intervals to be this painful. And the total number of enemies is still totally unclear. There's no mental torture like this endless marathon.

"Shit, anyway, I have to do it, don't I?"

I hit the ribbon to try and get out the Blazer Blade, and the monster began to happily introduce himself when he saw that.

"I am Fox Guildy, he who is enchanted by ribbons. I beg your remembrance, beautiful goddess."

"Who wants to remember you!"

A sharp appearance that put you in mind of a fox. You could draw a clear line between him and the muscular Elemerians so far.

"Heh... lovely as you are, you're strong, a wonderful ribbon. My heart is melting just to see it."

Another irritating thing was that good voice like a voice actor.

I'm glad he arrived in the tranquil suburbs. There isn't a peanut gallery yet. But even so, when I think about what happened yesterday, I want to decide this fight as fast as I can.

But he didn't assert himself the way the others did. He came quietly to this place with no sign of life. I don't think those two battles were a waste of time. He must want to work quietly, cautious of my power.

There's no use in talking any more. I put strength into the Blazer Blade.

But even with inevitable death staring him in the face, Fox Guildy was eerily calm.

“The sword that defeated my brawny comrades, born from a ribbon? I feel the work of fate.”

With a bewitching smile floating on his face, he produced a ribbon cord from nowhere, and after gazing at it with solemn over-importance, he spun around for no reason and threw it into the air.

The ribbon came flying in a coil as if it were in a rhythmic gymnastics performance, but it didn’t come close enough for me to hit it and drop it with the sword. It just circled my body several times and went back to him again.

“...What was that?”

“Ohh... s, so much... ghuk”

Fox Guildy coughed up blood and went down on his knees. An overreaction out of a very old shojo manga. What’s this guy doing? Nobody is going to mind if I kill him now, right?

"Hah, haaah...! Crystallize —— my love!!"

The Elemera radiating out of his body poured into the ribbon. It had been drifting in the air, but it suddenly froze in place and, breaking out in confused spikes and dips like a magnetic fluid, began to change shape.

"...Oh!?"

I was coming to the limits of my patience, but when the ribbon broke in two, and took the same shape as the Force Rivon, interest took the lead over caution. And then twintails suddenly came out of the ribbons, like a magician producing a dove from his hat.

"Ohh!?"

Without thinking I almost began to applaud. I'd already lost the chance to stop his magic trick. From the twintails the head, from the head the body, they appeared one after the other and finally even the hands and feet were all there, in the shape of a person.

"What's this about... wait, taking a good look, that's me!!"

It was surely a figure of me... of TailRed, life-sized.

"The ribbons set off what they tie so well... the twintails, especially. It is peerless. That divine Twintail Element of yours, although it is presumptuous, I have *tied it up* with my Elemera."

"You, you're saying that you are copying my power?"

"Hardly, it's nothing more than a reflection. It's a simple doll, just a simulation. And I, who do not have a powerful Doll Element like Lizard Guildy, cannot make it move on its own."

Now that you mention it, Twoearle said a single person can have more than one element. The Elemerians crystallize around a core of Elemera, but they can have multiple Elemera too?

He has the Ribbon Element, but on top of that he's using it in combination with a Doll...!

"However... the appearance is, as you see, very faithful ."

Fox Guildy gently touched the doll's Force Rivon like precious, fragile glass, with the eyes of love of an old man watching his grandchildren frolicking in the garden. It was too tender, which for the one being touched...

"Hi, i, i..."

...was a sight that made my blood run cold. Goosebumps rose on my skin. I took an unconscious step back.

The merciless crimes continued.

"Ha—h!!"

A battle cry flashed and I thought he was about to do a spin on tiptoes. But he reverently took the hands of the figure and began to dance.

When I first saw the student council president, I wasn't surprised to learn that dance and twintails went very well with each other. This time, it was a monster playing with a figurine, but the overwhelming power of the scene seemed to change the surroundings. It's so real that it doesn't seem like a hallucination - I can see a dance hall behind them.

“Uggyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!”

My twintails dance with the scream. No, that's only a doll, a doll...

I desperately tried to reason with myself, but it was useless. The doll with my face continued to dance hand in hand with the enemy. I broke out in an odd sweat.

“Whew...”

The dance was over, but the nightmare wasn’t.

His mind sharpened, Fox Guildy crossed his arms in front of his face and exhaled passionately, as if to force his heart to dissolve into the fight.

But.

“Fuu... One must not hurry. I haven’t finished drying myself off yet, I’m still chilly after the bath!”

In harmony with his true nature that mustn’t dissolve. The nature with the name ‘fantasy.’

“What are you doing to me in your head, you bastaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaard!!”

I am definitely not wearing clothes in there. Just thinking of it is disgusting.

This is the first time that I've ever felt like I was about to leak from an emotion other than fear.

...Eh, in the part of the Tailgear's functions that I deleted from my memory, wasn't there kind of a really convenient function for that?

"Oh, please wait!"

Once again Fox Guildy was talking to the figure.

"Even though we just took a bath, now you've gotten yourself so sticky with that popsicle! Oh, you're a hopeless kid, heh heh (handsome voice)"

"Nga————————ah!!"

I grabbed my head and rolled on the ground.

Souji-sama! A fake thing like that, you can just smash it!!

A signal from Twoearle as if she couldn't just watch anymore. Aika was also screaming something like ' creepy!' in the background. She means Fox Guildy. She's not talking about me.

"A, ah, that's right... true, right..."

Now is the perfect time to use the Tailgear's Elemeletion system!!

"Elemeletion... uh, you said that I can use the power of an Elemera Orb..."

That object he made from Elemera is a doll. That being the case, the Doll element that you collected from the first fight should work against it!!

That's right, if I can destroy that doll and the imaginary god inside it, I can come back alive from this living hell. Just like the monster said himself, Lizard Guildy's Doll should have a particularly strong influence on puppets.

"...De, stroy..."

He's still lost in delusions, just as before. It would be conceited for him even to call this an opening, he's completely defenseless. But when I look straight at him, it starts to corrode my spirit. I'll have to use the Doll Element, aim for the doll, and render that bastard powerless.

"Hh, ha..."

My breathing was becoming wild.

The appearance was perfect. And that alone meant that the twintails were reproduced very well. They couldn't have the mysterious radiance of the real thing, I guess, but I would give them a more than passing grade considering that they were being worn by a doll.

The twintails burned into my eyes, agitated and fluttering with Fox Guildy's fighting spirit.

"Ugh..."

My legs were shaking. They clung to the earth and I couldn't pull them off as though I were walking on birdlime.

I should be able to destroy a doll like that with my little finger. What am I hesitating for?

If I don't destroy it, he is going to get me, but...

"Aaaaaaah, I can't! I can't do it, how can I hurt twintaaaails!!"

but there are still some things that I can't let go of. They might be a fake, they might be filled with evil, but there is no sin in twintails.

How can I judge them with my own two hands, can such arrogance ever be forgiven...!?

"You're the real thing, aren't you."

"What!?"

"This is only a doll. But even so you cannot break it. You who love twintails... you who possess the strongest Twintail Element could never bring twintails to ruin!!"

"Ngh...!!"

Souji-sama!?

It was just as if my body was rebelling against my mind. My outstretched hand fell back feebly to my side, and finally I sank to the ground.

And the reward for the unsightly figure that had lost its will to fight. A deadly theater of delusion rushed down without mercy—

The two people watching the scene on the monitor in the main room of the base underneath the Mitsuka household were turning colors and panicking.

“That idiot, no matter how much they’re twintails, you ’re fighting a doll!!”

Aika was running back and forth, holding her head.

Waaaaah... Sto, stop — at least let me keep my clothes on—

A scream rang through the speakers that made you want to plug your ears (in several ways).

"What should I do, Souji is—! Souji is—!! Hey, we have a missile or something we can fire from here, don't we!?"

".....Now that this has happened, I..."

Twoearle was gripping the top of the console, and trembling. Blood ran down the lips like carefully preserved works of art.

"T, Twoearle..."

Some bitter decision was being made. Even Aika could see that.

"——Aika-san... I want you to do something."

"Is there something I can do!? If it can help Souji, I'll do anything!"

"Then, could you transform?"

"I understand, I just have to transform!"

Although she had replied instantly, once she had swallowed the meaning of it, the natural reaction burst

out of her. It was probably the only thing anyone could say in Aika's place.

"————Huh?"

"I believe I said earlier that there was one more candidate."

"No, bu... wha...!?"

"And so, Aika-san, it is you... The one other person in the world... who can wear the Tailgear."

Aika stared at her open-mouthed.

"You're lying."

"I am not lying."

It didn't seem like one of her usual jokes.

"But there were only two people in this world who can use it, right!? ...There's something too good to be true about that..."

"You are fellow holders of the Twintail Element. One might even imagine you were led to each other, drawn to each other."

"...Twintail... Element..."

Fate.

That was when she first started to believe in those four letters.

"...Souji."

They weren't ordinary childhood friends — the two of them had been led to meet by fate.

Aika turned red to the tips of her ears, holding back her beating heart.

"But, wait a second."

Unfortunately, Tsube Aika's body did not contain more than thirty seconds of romance.

"...I'm sure you said that that other person was a wild beast, and that if you handed it over the world would collapse..."

"What, it is true, right!?"

Into the pale white cheeks of the girl who drew that conclusion with a serious look out of a dramatic manga exploded the techniques developed since the first strike.

Twoearle gurgled with little bubbles.

"That's right, sure, I might be a barbarian... but I can save Souji!!"

Aika clenched her fist and spoke with resolution.

"A, Aika-san, you are... the worst kind of person, but you said something kind of cool just now..."

"You know, I don't like fighting with perverts like that either. But it's better for us to have more firepower, isn't it!? Why were you so obstinate about letting me join!?"

Twoearle quietly lowered the hand she held on her cheek, and, hesitating, spoke her heart.

"I did not want to get you involved in danger... I have nearly been killed several times in the few days I have been here, but... y-you are one of the precious friends... I have made in this world...!!"

She shook her hair into disarray, letting a tear glitter in her eye.

"...And, the real reason?"

"Afterwards, it will be necessary to input my bodily data into Souji's internal biology to keep up the power of the Tailgear — or I thought I would tell him something like that and indulge in a few indecent activities, hehehe... but if I give you a Tailgear also then we would have to pile your body on too to keep things consistent, right?"

"This total pervert ——!!"

"Aaaah, I said it without thinking, I hate this cursed constitution!!"

"Why are you always, always thinking about sex!!"

"What is wrong with a female being in heat for a male!!"

"Even if it is an argument, choose your words better!!"

Certainly humans are animals with a mating season that lasts all year but Twoearle, whose instinct was as strong as an animal's also, was frightening. Although with the lamented decline in the birth rate recently, maybe in the end she should be welcomed as an outstanding talent.

TailRed continued screaming as the two of them acted like idiots.

Stooooop, don't hold my twintails in your hands and skip — don't hum in that handsome voice — aaaaaa

The cries were clearly getting weaker. Aika loosened little by little with impatience, and

"I know very well that you hate me!! But right now I want to save Souji! Please, allow me to fight!! I'll get down on my knees in front of you, I'll do anything!!"

Twoearle smiled bitterly and looked straight into Aika's eyes.

"...I do not hate you. You are my friend — that was not a lie."

"...What."

Once again, Aika's cheeks were tinged with red.

Quiet and tender words.

Why? She cursed in her heart that it was probably acting, on the one hand, but... it made her feel a little bit happy, and that was frustrating.

"I may be doing it to save the world, but still, this is my own revenge. I feel a pain in my heart like my chest will break open making Souji-sama alone fight, when he has no direct connection to any of this. To drag his close friend into it too..."

It was the same for Aika. All she'd done was irresponsibly stop Souji from trying to protect the world, she hadn't tried to lift a finger on her own.

"I am sure Souji-sama will come to hate me if I allow you to fight... This is really the kinder way."

...That was probably closer to what she really thought.

"I have twintails too, you know. I'm a target too! So it's safer for me if I can fight myself. Although I don't think

I can be as earnest as Souji is about protecting strangers... ”

“Unlike Souji-sama... your Twintail Element is for your own sake, isn’t it...? You are going to gamble the twintails you have come to love as if they were your very life? There is no going back once you put on the bracelet! ”

She was not used to it, but maybe for the first time Aika felt concern for herself, and blew through her nose, hmph.

“I am not such a kid that I can’t take responsibility for my own decisions, Twoearle.”

Twoearle nodded her head hard and produced a bracelet from her pocket, shining with blue light.

They would live or die together. Twoearle seemed to be ready for that too.

“Aika-san, please promise me, no matter what happens —”

Aika nodded with a serious look.

"— you'll let me be the first one Souji-sama makes into a woman."

"Hey."

"We have no time now! It is all right, just say yes!! I cannot give you this if you do not promise! Or are you, who are trying to be a hero, going to knock me down by brute force and steal it!!"

"..."

"You are not a person like that, Aika-san....."

Aika smiled sweetly —

What is a hero?

A fighter for the weak, an emissary of justice.

They fight for those who are not strong. They would not take a weak young girl who was putting up no resistance and use a dangerous throw technique that looks as though it's about to be forbidden in modern martial arts, would they.

They would not drop her head-first into the ground so that she couldn't land safely. That is not something a human being would do.

What is a hero?

Twoearle threw a piece of difficult philosophy like the pure questions of a child at the empty air as she tried to stop the beating of her heart.

Her head was buried in the ground, however, so the " air" was under the floor.

"Wait for me, Souji..."

Aika ran through the hallways of the base with the hair that was her pride flying behind her. And she put the bracelet Twoearle had entrusted to her on her right wrist.

"— Tail,... on!!"

She'd heard the startup words as she listened to the explanation, and at the time she had complained it was embarrassing, but now she shouted them without self-consciousness.

A belt of blue light circled Aika's body, answering the words spun without hesitation. A decision too small to notice in a moment torn out of time. And then, the proof.

Aika's arms and legs began to glow as a huge number of specks of light flooded out and took the shape of a cocoon. She shut her eyes to focus her heart. At the same instant, her body was covered by a blue suit. Compared to Red it was a little more exposed, but the aggressive design that was suggestive of a soldier suited Aika well.

The spaceleap catapult in the cage set up at the very front of the underground base unfolded and flicked Aika out like a shell from a cannon.

A permanent setup of the overtechnology she'd seen on the first day with the penlight device.

Her field of vision was covered with richly coloured light.

"High...!!"

The transfer point was just over a clump of buildings near the scene of the fight.

As the space transfer finished, Aika kicked the concrete of the building's rooftop hard.

"Whoa, it really is amazing. It feels like I could reach the clouds."

Not a leap but flight.

As if she wanted to recover the time they'd wasted on pointless comedy, Aika begged time to go faster, just to go faster.

"So I'm part of the weird people too now, huh... But you know, what else could I do?"

She cut the air with speed you might see from a fighter jet. Those twintails that were fluttering in the wind were just like two wings ruling the blue sky.

"It's just going to keep being this dangerous, so... I have to be by his side, right!"

Abandoning the little doubts about whether she could or couldn't fly — she became a shooting star, a flash of light leaving a trail behind it.

"Why don't I read a picture book for you. ...Oh, my, you're such a spoiled little kid —"

The mental attack in a sweet voice that could make women melt was holding back from the climax. A terrifying foe, Fox Guildy.

It was a fake, after all... no matter how many times I told myself that, I couldn't push those twintails supported by his tremendous willpower down into the realm of imitation.

And the other terrifying thing was his self-control. He kept pulling out things that would have been impossible

unless his mind were completely broken to fantasies about his little girl doll.

This is the power of the heart.

To me, who had been under the delusion that destructive force was strength, the bastard was on the other side of a wall.

"I, is this as far as I go... Are my twintails going to lose to a guy like this...!!"

On my knees, my breathing was getting faint, I couldn't even stand up.

And then suddenly an ear-splitting sound rang like lightning had struck.

"Stop right there! Pervert!!"

"Hmm!?"

"Huh!?"

Damn it, I turned and looked too. I thought they might be talking to me.

Blue light, still tied up with the sky, stood before me and Fox Guildy.

“...can’t be...”

It looked like there were a few differences in how Imagine Chaff worked, with both strong and weak points . On the first day Twoearle had used something that blanked out your existence itself, but that made it easy to notice you if you shouted or something.

The one built into the Tailgear was specialized to deceive the senses and protect the true identity of the wearer. It couldn’t be used for stealth, but it kept others from tying the person wearing the Tailgear to anyone else with an equal sign. And that meant you could safely show your face.

...But this version didn’t seem to work on people who knew you from the start.

In other words, although for anyone else this would be a new and unknown warrior, for me —

“Ai..... ka.....?”

I muttered in a hoarse voice.

The warrior whose body was clad in a blue suit was the girl I knew well, my childhood friend Tsube Aika.

“Who art thou!?”

“I am...”

“It was here! There they are!”

“!”

The fight had gone on much too long.

They sniffed it out from somewhere, as I thought. We were surrounded at a distance by reporters and staff from TV programs, and ringed by several cameras.

But Aika shouted as if she were talking to herself, without paying the slightest attention to those strange eyes.

“I am — TailBlue!!”

Aika took that codename that even I am a little unsure about and spoke it in front of me, her enemy, and the world.

Strong, heroic.

Like a rite of passage she had to go through to be accepted as a hero.

An amazing look on her face without a single shred of doubt.

And an overwhelming power that seemed to reach up from her body to touch the heavens.

As if she'd taken someone who she hadn't known a few days ago and slammed them head-first through the floor without a single hesitation —

"Oohhh... This is still more wonderful — I can't believe she had comrades...! Haha, this is a crisis... why is it that I'm cornered and in danger of my life but I still can 't keep my heart from pounding fast!!"

"...Man, this creepy doll really is the spitting image of you... but!"

Aika took a stone with a faint green glow out of the piece installed on the back of her hand.

"Elemeletion!!"

A hollow glowing an even brighter blue was exposed with a slide motion, and the Elemera Orb that had floated into the air was automatically mounted on it. When the cover closed, Aika's whole body began to give off the same green light.

"Elemera Orb — Doll!"

With those words she engaged the Elemeletion system of the Tailgear. A special piece of equipment to let us control the power of the crystallized Elemera Orbs.

The Tailgear use a shared subspace for storage, so the orbs I recover can be used even by other gear. But... I had decided to fight alone, so that feature was useless to me. I 'd been shoving it into a corner of my mind until I saw it with my eyes right now.

Yeah. It should have stayed a useless feature.

"That is... That's Lizard Guildy's!!"

"Well, now, be nice, little doll."

The doll that had been made in my shape was wrapped in the light of the Doll Element, and the sense of presence suddenly vanished.

I had thought it was so real before, but now it was as unnatural as a picture of my face pasted onto a mannequin, and Fox Guildy's delusions, so powerful that I could see them myself, also vanished without a trace.

"Aah!?"

"A strategic mistake, isn't that? If you're going to use a doll to lead us astray, you should have a stronger Doll Element, or it's meaningless."

No, there's no way these guys could know I can use the power of the Elemera Orbs I've recovered. And this doll with a pulse as though it's alive, as though it's about to start moving even now, was an incredible trump card at least against me. If they made a mistake — it was not predicting the existence of an irregular.

I had it explained directly to me, but I didn't even try it once. This power that might be the true strength of the Tailgear — Aika, who had just been listening on the side, was the first one to use it.

"Hoitto"

Aika aimed at the nose of the unresisting doll, and, in intense contrast, with a yell and a full swing of her arm, visited it with her fist. The impact shot through its whole body and it crumbled apart like spun sugar.

"What have you done!?"

I saw it happen as if in slow motion. The sight of my own face folding in and breaking stayed in my mind — and would probably give me nightmares for a few days.

"I can't believe it! You destroyed it without hesitating! Hey, that thing's a model of your precious comrade!!"

"My comrade? He's right here. Right?"

With a fearless smile, Aika winked at me.

"...Comrade..."

At the realization that my precious childhood friend had been caught up in the fight, my face went pure white . But concerns like that were above my reach right now.

I staggered to my feet as though a magic spell had been broken. I didn't have to say anything. The trust without a speck of cloud, the days we'd piled up between

us, were bonds that couldn't have been strengthened with ten thousand words.

And now, watching over her more carefully than heaven, the "friend" that she had overcome to get here — Twoearle floated behind her like an aura, wearing a noble expression. What's this feeling that I've been having, I can't put it into words.

It’s okay, right.

Twoearle is still alive, right.

"Y... you... but in any case your Twintail Element is weaker than TailRed's...! Then you are going to give me your Elemera! First, those wonderful huge ribbons, I'll take them now!"

"That's a joke!"

The ribbons as sharp as antennae that gathered her hair to left and right — she crushed them with her fists, and light burst into the sky like drops of water.

In an instant, the light took the shape of a spear and collected in Aika's hands.

All Aika had done with Twoearle until now was fight, but she'd listened to each one of the things she'd said carefully, and now she put them into faithful practice. And so she didn't have a second of hesitation. The Tailgear answered to her will. Equipment you could call your own body, with no need for a manual.

"Ohh...!"

A weapon that held within it the brilliance of a star. A rich and infinitely deep sapphire as if the blue of the Earth had condensed to form it. Not a hair of difference from the water god Poseidon, the great trident Wave Lance —

So that was the weapon of TailBlue. I'm glad, it wasn't a hammer or an axe or something.

"I'm a newcomer to the fight, but...!"

All the way open. Brake Release.

Currents of water in a column — Blue's Aura Pillar wrapped around the body Fox Guildy.

"Ugh, uuuuuuu...!!"

"If it's twintails then... I've been wearing them for much longer than... you!!"

A mighty thrust that seemed as if it could drill between dimensions. Execute Wave pierced Fox Guildy.

"Gwaaaaaah..!! A... a dream... at the end...! — you're going out without your clothes again... you're going to catch a cold... o, oh, I see! You can use ribbons that way toooooooooo...!!"

Fox Guildy laughed in satisfaction and exploded, scattering into the air. And the TailRed in his heart probably never put on any clothes.

"...Twoearle... I did it!"

TailBlue's smile filled with accomplishment was absorbed into the clear blue sky.

I hope you don't mean you're confessing to her murder ...

The lance vanished as if it were dissolving into the air, and TailBlue, now empty-handed, stretched grandly.

"Alright, start filming! TailRed... wait, there's someone else!?"

The instant the fight ended, the press corps brazenly crowded in. I backed away unconsciously, but TailBlue leaped out in front of them with a three-fingered peace sign and smiled as they were setting up their cameras.

"I'll be fighting too from now on~, nice to meet you all! The two of us together are the Twintails!"

"H, hey!!"

"It's fine, I'm just letting them have a picture."

TailBlue's Elemeletion system activated again.

Elemera Orb — Ribbon.

She had just gotten the power a second ago in the fight , but she used it the instant she had her hands on it. Two still sharper pieces extended from the Tailgear's ribbons, and became huge wings to release us from the force of gravity.

"Oh, we can use this —!! It's like they're flying!!"

At an altitude so high I could see clouds beneath us, a smile came onto Aika's face, totally different from the fake one she had given the cameras earlier .

My eyes couldn't help but be stolen.

The twintails I'd always seen close to me, holding the blue of the sky, shining brighter than anything.

"Hm? What's up?"

"No... um."

I'm an idiot.

That skillful exit, like a performer. I'm sure that even in that small time they took all the pictures and videos they wanted. Why did Aika do that? I don't even have to ask.

She did it so that I wouldn’t have to bear all of the burden and the strange eyes — I'm prepared to bet that was the reason. She was remembering how I complained this morning...

"Aika... I'm sorry I've been so undependable all the time."

"Don't misunderstand. I made my own decision to transform. ...Those perverts just make the stress build up in me. Hey, listen, you know, I'm a hasty person."

My chest felt warm at the thoughtfulness of my childhood friend.

— Chest...

As that word crossed my mind and I moved my line of sight, I was hit again by self-reproach.

TailBlue's gear has a lot of chest exposure.

I have a drastic transformation that goes even as far as my sex, but Aika stays the same.

Her modest chest, her even chest, is the least suited to that exposure. What kind of punishment game is this? She's wearing a suit set up for someone with huge breasts. She has no cleavage but there's an opening to show you her cleavage. Is there anything so tragic?

I'm sorry, Aika —

I've been so useless that you had to wear such an embarrassing costume...

"......Hey."

Maybe TailBlue noticed the gaze of pity that was being poured on the single point of her chest, but the powerful arms that had been supporting me loosened all of a sudden.

"Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!"

Skydiving without a parachute.

Really a very thrilling and exciting experience——

You don't see it outside of cartoons from the good old days, but I came out alive from the comedy of a human silhouette sunk into the asphalt. But what met my eyes when I returned home was a woman half-dead and half-alive, in much worse shape than me.

"...Awawawawa."

I shuddered with fear.

Human life is not shown in points, but if someone innocently asked what in the world HP 1/9999 would look like, I think Twoearle right now would function as a perfect sample... such a state.

"What happened to you!? Twoearle! My God... Souji, an Ultima Guil assassin might have penetrated the base!! Twoearle... we'll take revenge!!"

Even Aika has... Aika's a hasty person, but the honesty that makes her bad at lying used to be her saving grace. But now even she has mastered Seek Time=Zero...

"So, Souji-sama... watch yourself, please. This world has in it... evil bandits who cheat their childhood friends... They even say cool lines they're not used to and put on a moving show, but then without letting you say yes or no they rob you and smash you to dust, terrible... villains ..."

Bam, a sharp noise. Twoearle's eyes peeled back and she let go of consciousness.

As she displayed such savage valour, she looked at her wrist and mine as if she had remembered something...

she compared red and blue together, and blushed with the softness of fluff on a dandelion.

I was hooked in too, looking at her wrist together with mine... and then my face jerked into a bitter smile that was as hard as the floor Twoearle's head was casually lying on.

What is this... the world might really perish. Overtechnology far beyond that of Earth has fallen into the hands of the one person who should not obtain power.

The world seems to have found a saviour, but in fact it has brought down a god of destruction—

"What is this, whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!!"

From early morning, the howls of the god of destruction echoed through the streets.

Aika came running into my house without a word of greeting and sunk her teeth into the television.

"I'm the one that wants to know... Uuuh, they're giving me another weird introduction..."

The vast majority of the special features on the news, on the net, and on all kinds of media were about a young girl being tormented by a monster and collapsing to the ground. Messages of encouragement, "We will spare no effort to support that girl," were coming in one after another from leaders across the country,

TailBlue, who had appeared like a nova and defeated the enemy, was treated like a footnote.

It wasn't a lack of material. All my shots were taken by surprise, and Blue had made a special effort to be photographed, so compared to me, her footage should have been a lot easier to use.

Despite that —

<<I see... So to summarize, we don't know whether this blue girl is an ally of hers or not?>>

Yes, I believe it would be rash to pass judgment at this stage. As much as she might be smiling, we are worried about the terrible violence in her eyes.

Occasionally they talked about her, but even then, that is what it was like. A totally serious debate.

But, against all expectations for commentators on a news program aimed at the general public, their powers of observation were surprisingly sharp.

They're exactly right about TailBlue, aren't they?

— As I thought that, all of a sudden it turned into a closeup of TailRed with tears in her eyes, and a smiling newscaster appeared on a corner wipe screen.

Waa~ah!!

I took a long, hard look at the blown-up picture of (a crying) TailRed.

...They are magnificent twintails.

There's nothing special that I'd praise about my own body, and I don't really care either, but just the way I

look when I'm transformed, just those twintails, even though I know they're mine, I'm drawn to them.

And TailBlue's twintails were beautiful enough to beat or equal them, but even then...

Twintails can cover all other faults and weak points for me, but maybe that doesn't work for regular people.

Ohh, but you know, TailRed was very sweet today too, he heehee

Hey, watch what you're saying, old man with such an impressive title on your nameplate.

I made appropriate use of the remote control, but TailRed was anywhere and everywhere, all over. All channels had been captured, like special election broadcasts. I rested my agonized head in my hands.

"Aaah..."

Love and hate on two sides of the same coin — exactly that.

If things stay like this, it might not be long until my mind itself crumbles.

But there is one person with worries on the opposite vector from mine.

"I'm the one whose head hurts! It's nothing but Red on every channel, why!? On TV or the net, Blue is being left out everywhere!!"

"......The net? You checked the net?"

I thought you had given yourself awfully deep rings under your eyes, Aika, but those are the product of all-night net surfing? I was afraid that it would be like this, so I've been staying away from my PC. In this situation, checking out rumors on the net takes courage.

"I was angry at the net, but on television... that's what I was thinking! I thought of course there would be a lot of people insulting me on the net, but... and then this!!"

"I think they said quite a lot on TV already... is there worse than this on the net?"

"It's terrible. When I went on a bulletin board and posted a comment praising Blue, they replied at the

speed of sound, 'jien otsu'!" [Thanks for your hard work writing and starring in your own production / nice sockpuppet, faggot]

"What kind of bulletin board are you hanging around? "

"And they said things like 'honnin-san, chiisu'..." [Person in question, say cheese / TailBlue pls go]

"It's the truth, right?"

"In the end someone even recommended my ID for a ban! It's terrible, isn't it!?"

You've gone through a fierce war in just one night, Aika.

"You don't really have to force things like that, do you? And I mean, you didn't start fighting because you wanted to be popular."

"You're a huge hit, you can say that! I don’t know why, but this... They leave me out even when I expose myself to the media, it's really depressing!!"

"I feel like maybe I understand, maybe not."

I look at Aika’s wild eyes and another bitter smile comes onto my face. People have all kinds of troubles, I guess.

"Oh, my, Aika-san, are you thinking to yourself, 'I'm the cuter one, screech!'"

Wearing a neck brace that was also painful to look at, Twoearle came into the living room with a malevolent smile. She was holding a notebook to her chest like a portrait of a dead man, and on it you could plainly see TailBlue's gallant figure in the maximised browser window.

"I don't think there can be any question that TailBlue is also very popular, look."

Running her finger over the touch panel, she moved the window.

On another window below it there was a token picture of TailBlue from the side and a massive amount of text underneath.

・ Wearing a suit with the chest open when she's completely flat. Is she a masochist? Is this a masochist?

- For a second, I thought she was erotic. I was wrong.
- Tiny breasts but that sexy outfit and face, lolololololol

...and other warm messages of support.

So many such comments had been made that you couldn't reach the bottom even if you scrolled and scrolled. Just like enthusiastic encouragement for people running a 24-hour relay marathon.

"Twoearle, tell me exactly who wrote these and where, in the whole country. You'd be able to do it, couldn't you! Do it! I'm going to run a mission on them right now!!"

"Personal information has to be protected!"

"Protect my worries about my body too! Why does Souji become a little girl when he transforms but I stay the same! The chest is open, isn't the premise of the suit that your breasts grow!?"

"......It is very possible that your 'flat chest' Elemera is overcoming the strength of the Tailgear. ...Pfff, hehe."

"Having a small chest is Elemera?"

"If Aika-san is troubled by it, naturally it is very possible."

Clothing and accessories can exist as Elemera, but even special features of a girl's body that are difficult for her to appreciate are defined as Elemera? The subject is deep.

"...Yo, u..."

"Aa~h! Aika-san, are you going to put your hands on me again! Even though the whole world can see through you and your dangerous eyes!"

"Nggh"

Aika's clenched fists were trembling over her head.

As if she were clearing away the grudge up to now, Twoearle kept nibbling at her.

"The people of the world can see that unjust part of you. If you are mad about it, then first you need to do something about that habit of hitting people whenever something happens. Once you have fixed that, I'm sure everyone will start to appreciate Blue too. ...As someone who makes Red look good. Hee hee hee~"

Aika smiled and gave Twoearle a peace sign.

...Or so I thought but she stuck those two fingers into Twoearle's beautiful eyes.

"Gnyaaaaaahh!!"

"Hey, listen! What did she just say!!"

"But... When I heard that, before the electrical signals from my brain arrived at my hands and feet, there was a chemical reaction!!"

"Electrical signals, chemical reactions, that isn't biology anymore!"

"...I... I'm surprised, but Aika-san may be a killer robot from the future. She has been sent back to the present day to kill the two of us as we try to protect the world!!"

Don't say such crazy stuff, is what I thought, but the reality is that she could say almost anything at this point.

"...Hey. That PC—"

Aika grabbed Twoearle's notebook as if a premonition had hit her, almost a divine revelation.

"Ah—"

She pinned her with her right hand as she tried desperately to grab it back, set it on the table, and operated the keyboard and trackpad skillfully with her left hand.

I saw that "ji" had been typed into the browser's search bar.

After hitting the space bar just once, the first thing that appeared in the text prediction was — "jien otsu." [nice sockpuppet, faggot]

...Eh.

"....."

"....."

I leaned in closer without thinking.

Aika minimized the browser, and clicked the "blue.txt" file on the desktop. It looked a lot like an itemized list of drafts of comments about TailBlue.

The "is she a masochist?" paragraph, that was there too .

"...It was yo————————————————————————ou!!"

"Eeek~~~ found out at the speed of sound!?"

"You have science that soars beyond worlds, don't do this petty little net strong man stuff!!"

"Aika-san could not understand! The net is the last refuge for the hearts of those without strength, and you come and stick your nose into it, this is why I hate people with fulfilling real lives!!"

No, that's too misleading, it's not fulfilling, it's just overflowing with brute strength.

"Don't make libel the last refuge of your heart, you idiot!"

"Then I will use slander—!!"

Bald. This pointless feud is too crude to be called information warfare. It's bald. It's just bald.

I thought I heard a dull crunch sound, so I was afraid and could not turn my eyes.

"...I have been noticing this little by little, but Souji-sama, although you scold Aika-san, you do not do anything practical to help me, do you..."

Dead eyes that might appear in a dream, accusing me of something.

"Huh!? No, you kind of look like you're having fun, so no matter what happens I always stand my ground, or something..."

"Ha, haha, Souji-sama, you most likely enjoy the sight of me being knocked around... So you are in possession of that Elemera as well."

"Wro—ng!!"

"If that is so, then I will also kill my heart and bear this treatment. These days of penance that would have choked the life out of an ordinary woman long ago."

She was trying to make her voice brave and charming, but as you might expect she could not shut out the intense, utter pain and burst out in a scream like cloth tearing.

“All right, all right! Aika, cut it out! There is such a thing as a limit!!”

“She made a fool out of me on the net, even if I break one or two of her arms no one can accuse me of doing anything wrong!!”

“If everyone used that kind of logic the whole country would be dead tomorrow...”

On my way to school I was discussing future plans with Aika, who I had coaxed and soothed and finally gotten back into a good mood.

“Hey... is there a need to shout ‘Brake Release’ or ‘ Aura Pillar’?”

"We don't want this pet treatment to escalate, do we? I want to act like a hero as much as I can. Even if it is probably an exaggeration."

"Does it have any effect..."

Of course, it has an effect. The heroic act aside, we're talking about the Tailgear that turns spirit into power, so putting it into words is more useful than you would think.

The startup key. The on-off code of power. The concentration of consciousness becomes more efficient by using a word as the trigger.

"You were really into it from the first battle, though, Aika. Why ask now?"

"B, back then I was just desperate, and part of it was me talking myself into doing it! I was just trying to get as close as I could to you!"

She finished talking, and for some reason suddenly jumped and turned away from me.

"The fighting is fine. And I mean, you decided it yourself. But you could be a little more distant, right? I think a proud and aloof hero, you know, that's a possibility too."

"Umm, yeah..."

The scene on our way to school, as our conversations proceeded on slightly different tracks. And I took notice of a slight variation.

The number of girls with twintails had gone up.

"Why are you only looking at girls, what's up?"

I finally calmed her down, but right away discontent is born on another vector.

"No.... I'm worried. I think the influence of the Twintails is making more students wear twintails. They were fanning the flames on the morning news too, right."

"...I need to hurry too. Why are there so many more...!"

"Eh? Hurry? What for?"

"Nothing at all. But you know, that's just the usual thing, isn't it? Like when an indie band breaks into the major leagues and somehow it stops being interesting."

"Noo — I think this is different from that. I can't really say why, though."

When I came back to myself I realized I was holding onto one of Aika's twintails as usual.

What is this uneasiness?

Even though twintails are spreading. Even though I should be happy enough to jump into the air. Why?

"Come to think of it, I wonder if President Shindou has started wearing twintails recently too?"

"Why are you talking about the president all of a sudden!?"

"No, but I'm sure I would have noticed someone with those amazing twintails in middle school."

"Apparently the president transferred here at the start of high school. But in less than half a year she's become something like the face of the school."

"Wow~"

Of course she did. With twintails like that, they'd hand you the president's office on your first day of school.

"But think about that. A person who is incredibly good often has a surprisingly wicked heart. Even those twintails may be calculated, or part of a strategy. Although that childish body is my personal preference."

"What do you mean, calculated? Who would wear twintails to make someone like them?"

"N-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-no one would do something like that!"

"Pupupu— only your cheeks are TailRed, Aika-san."

The two of us halted in our tracks simultaneously.

She mixed in too naturally, so I didn't notice but—

"I will be transferring to your class today, Souji-sama! And now, Aika-san, can you please scream 'Y— you—' like the underdog you are. I will take the seat next to Souji-sama without listening to the teacher and say 'We'll

be together even at school now, Souji-sama!' and then the boys in the class will start saying 'T—that bastard, what's his relationship with that girl,' so—"

"Go back home, you mangy cur————————————————!!"

Wearing a school uniform as if it were natural, blending into the school morning scene as if it were natural — Aika kicked Twoearle into the air. Her scream 'gyaaaaaa...' faded into the distance, subject to the Doppler effect.

She really flew in an arc in the direction of my house. I surely can't be seeing these laws of physics that don't exist outside of gag manga.

"Good morning! It's a beautiful day today, isn't it!!"

The voice burst out suddenly and I turned around, surprised.

Speaking of the president... it was President Shindou, with a smile that covered her whole face. You didn't see our action movie starlet's act of brutality, then.

We were just passing students and she probably didn't even know our names, but she greeted us without putting any distance between us... this is the reason everyone likes her, isn't it.

Or maybe she noticed this damp atmosphere and decided to encourage us.

"Good morning, President, you seem quite happy today!"

"Yes! I'm very happy to learn that TailRed has a comrade!"

"! That's right, that's right, Blue is t..."

Although I went silent mixed with cold sweat at the thought that the president might have heard what we were saying earlier, the mood had changed completely. Aika's shining eyes said, You understand, don't you! as she tried to move closer to the president.

It's going to be a while before that stops bothering you, isn't it? The roots run deep.

"—It really is a good thing. Isn't it good that she doesn't have to keep fighting alone."

"...Eh?"

At the words thick with emotion that I hadn't even imagined, Aika stopped walking.

"No matter how strong she is, I'm sure it would be hard alone. But if she has a comrade, they can support each other. We can cheer them on as much as we like, but we can't support them in any real sense... so I'm really happy that TailRed has someone else helping her."

"...Yeah."

I nodded hard in agreement.

In place of Aika, who was looking down, lost for words.

"You are really a supporter of the Twintails, aren't you , President."

When I said it the president looked down as if she were embarrassed and pulled on one side of her twintails . "You might think it's weird at this age, but... I look up to heroes. I still watch tokusatsu shows for kids and buy figures and things like that."

"I see..."

You look like a kid, so I don't see anything childish about it — I'm sure she'd get mad at me if I said that, but instead a feeling of affinity with the president welled up in me.

"And on that day too, the truth is that I was stolen while I was attending a hero event that I had slipped away from the maids to see."

I found it out myself later, but there seems to have been an event with tokusatsu heroes and anime heroines. Absolutely aimed at kids, but... the president probably blended in perfectly.

"So I felt it was fate. Meeting TailRed, and being saved by her."

"Fate..."

"Haha, sorry. ...Why am I talking about this..."

An instant of shock. The president had seen TailRed up close and talked to her, even if it had only been one or two words.

I don't see how she could recognize me in my real body, but.....

But I have to throw away those doubts and convey my thanks properly. For her support and her true and pure feelings — to my first fan, President Shindou.

"President. I'm sure TailRed is... and TailBlue also, both of them are very thankful that someone is cheering them on the way you are. I think it will make them feel better in tough times."

"Thank you. I believe you are... first-year A class, Mitsuka Souji-kun. ...Oh."

The president blinked her eyes, and brought her face close as if she were looking up at me.

At a distance close enough that I might have kissed her .

"P — president?"

Seeing me flustered, she shook her head in understanding and fell back half a step as if she were dancing. Her twintails shook in a light motion, and my heart also shook.

"It's just my imagination... probably... hehehe, well, then."

We said goodbye to the president mumbling to herself with some strange enthusiasm in her voice, and for a little while stood still.

"That's amazing. Has she memorized every single one of the students' names?"

Aika had been silent the whole time. Now she shook herself off as if she were bored and breathed a deep sigh.

"...The president really is a good person. I feel like I was an idiot for worrying about the criticism on the net."

"Yeah, like I said, she's just a normal good person. Twoearle just had some weird misunderstanding."

"...That's why I'm worried. Stupid."

"Huh? Did I say something?"

"Shut up, let's get going."

Aika shoved my side with her satchel, and the two of us headed toward the school gate at a half-run.

A fan, cheering us on with true and pure feelings. It was an inspiring thought that made my back straighten up, but... at the den of thieves spreading before my eyes, I slumped back down again like high-speed reverse playback.

“Ah, TailRed smiled for me!!”

“Hmph, you always think so small... You know I’ve printed TailRed on my trunks with a thermal transfer printer! I can’t even do my schoolwork properly anymore unless we’re together!!”

“You bastard, you made a TailRed bot! I made one before you, you know!!”

“Shut up, mine has more followers! Anyway, there are already around 3000 TailRed bot accounts!! It’s a little late, isn’t it!!”

“Ok, all right, then we’ll go to the movie theatre after school, TailRed-tan.” (an unconnected conversation with his phone)

This was the scene as we entered our high school. Loud conversations right in front of the gate as if they were natural.

"Aika. I'm not being sarcastic at all. If you can change places with me then please change. Seriously. They can call me a sockpuppet or a masochist or anything and I'll happily agree."

I spoke quietly to Aika's back, as she hesitated in front of the gate as if she were on a bridge trying to decide whether or not to jump.

"...I've cooled off a little."

We each had our own reasons why it was getting hard to stand this any longer, and both of our heads dropped down at the same time.

A human-shaped hole in the ground was shining with moonlight.

Something had fallen on the road in front of the Mitsuka household, and something had left tracks as it crawled out. Still boiling with the resentment of the girl that had not been able to penetrate the garden of youth bursting with light.

2 am—.

Souji had the farthest back of the three rooms on the second floor of the Mitsuka household. And to that place went a shadow on tiptoe. The soft silhouette told you that it was a woman — a girl.

Even though you might be a thin girl, climbing up wooden stairs would make the floorboards creak, but perhaps because it was one of the foundational skills of a stalker, she was strangely good at keeping her centre of gravity low, and maybe that was what let her climb the stairs with such a surprising lack of sound.

She crossed the hallway the same way without a single sound at all and stopped in front of Souji's room.

"...Hee hee."

She inserted something like a knife into the gap between the door and the wall.

If you had looked closer at the thing as thin as a razor and strained your eyes, you could have confirmed that it was vibrating delicately. However, naturally the noise of the vibration had been made nearly inaudible.

Once she had put it in about five centimetres, she moved it slowly down until it reached the position of the lock. In the instant when the blade touched the lock, it made an extraordinarily small “click” sound, and went through it without the slightest difficulty after that.

And it was easy to guess that the invader was no ordinary person from the fact that the lock was not a wooden bolt but a metal latch.

The strange shadow stole into the room.

Twoearle’s face appeared for an instant in the sliver of moonlight shining in from the window.

But was it really her? From the look in her eyes she was not in her right mind.

Softly, softly.

Holding her breath she moved to the middle of the room.

The expression “holding her breath” may not be accurate.

She seemed to be inhuman, not breathing at all.

Calmly and quickly.

Her movements had so little waste in them that it made one think of a ninja.

Twoearle was wearing something like tights over her whole body. Her movements aside, even though she blended perfectly into the dark there was still something glamorous about her, and a more suitable word than ninja might have been—phantom thief. That was the most favourable comparison. If you wanted to be insulting she looked like a comic character in a play.

A belt was wrapped around her hips, and various types of tools were stuck in it.

From it, she took out a carpet roller.

“Hee, hee.”

She rolled it on the floor carefully and, paying close attention to the trash that had stuck to it, picked out a body hair. With incredibly practiced movements, she separated it with tweezers into one of the plastic bags that she held between her fingers.

Labels with writing on it were stuck to the bags. “ Head hair,” and it was hard to make sure because of the shadow of her finger but as you would expect “— hair” was written on another.

She pinched the zipper with thumb and finger and quickly closed it and put it in a back pocket.

No matter how she acted, no one would believe this was her first offense.

The system was so practiced that it stood by itself as a finished product.

Twoearle’s next target was the closet.

She touched the hinged door with a finger, checking the slight noise of the pulley.

What should be done about that.

Without hesitation, she pulled the doors open in a single movement. Thanks to her special technique, that reduced thinking time to almost nothing. There was a creak, but it was the matter of a moment.

Right away she glanced behind her at the sleeping Souji, but he showed no sign at all of waking.

Satisfied with that, she found the blazer of his school uniform and took it out of the closet.

“Hee.....mm.....sfffffffffffff”

Hoping for the warmth and scent of the man she had given her heart to, she brought the clothes he had taken off up to her cheek... such a scene fitting for twilight hours, it was nothing like that.

She replaced all the gas in her body with air strained using the blazer as a filter.

So it seemed. In a demonstration of lung capacity beyond normal for a woman, she kept inhaling without a break or a sign when she would stop.

Like a round pink lifeform that enters humming a jaunty drawing song.

And finally she stood there with a drunk look on her face.

The look in her eyes was still not normal, and the synergy doubled the eerie feeling.

“Hah, hah.”

Although up until now she had kept everything absolutely secret, perhaps at last she couldn’t muffle herself any longer. Rough breathing began to leak out.

“Uhehe.”

Or one would prefer that a girl’s voice didn’t get into that area.

“N... nuh.”

“!”

Twoearle froze in the middle of the trip at the sound of Souji’s voice.

She strained her neck and turned to look behind her again.

Moving on tiptoe, one foot after the other.

She swiftly approached the bed and checked the situation.

The healthy sleeping face was just the same. A sigh of relief.

"...Souji-sama."

For a moment the smile on her face was filled with motherly affection, but—

"Uhehehe."

It went right back to evil.

The feeling of something tepid touching his cheek.

At the uncomfortable feeling, Souji's mind was brought back out of sleep.

"Nuh..."

His eyes opened dimly.

(A dream...?)

He began to come back to consciousness, and the blurry world focused into an image.

Someone was smiling at him...

(————An angel...)

...a devil like an angel... or not even that but just a grinning devil.

“Uhehe... aah.”

“Ugyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!”

What was touching his cheek was Twoearle’s drool.

With her mouth wide open and drool hanging out, she reminded him vividly of evil extraterrestrial life.

He began to want to drive the power loader in the hold of the spaceship into the side of her face and throw her into outer space.

“Finally... the time has come—”

Her son’s pained screaming reached the ears of the mother sleeping in the bedroom down the hall, and her mouth twisted into a grin—

“Uuuuuu~h! I, I am sorry, if such a creepy woman appears by your bedside all of a sudden in the middle of the night, naturally you would pull away from her!!”

The lights were now on in my room. Twoearle had been kneeling down on the floor the whole time without even trying to raise her head.

“Being creepy doesn’t have anything to do with it! — or rather...”

It’s not the way you look but the way you act that’s creepy, I was about to say, but held my tongue. I am deeply aware that I am not qualified to criticize someone else for that.

“Anyway, why did you suddenly show up in my room in the middle of the night!”

“T, that is, uh... I found an error in my calculations for the fit of the Tailgear, so I thought you might let me redo the measurement of the circumference of your face. ...But I thought it would also be bad to wake you up.”

“In the middle of night all of a sudden... you’re a hurry ? I don’t mind if you just come wake me up normally, that’s better for my mental health.”

Eh, but the Tailgear doesn’t have the face covered. ... What is this, my head is fuzzy. If I were a detective, I think I could probably use this warm liquid on my cheek as a clue and work my way to the truth, but I’m not.

“Anyway look...”

“——! U... ghkk... no, not now...!”

All of a sudden Twoearle grabbed her chest and collapsed.

“Twoearle!?”

“Haah, haah, aa...nh, a, aa...”

Her seductive voice threw me off balance once again.

“Hey, are you sick!?”

“No, Souji-sama, if you get close...”

This is not something minor. ...Could it be...

“Twoearle—... that thing about adjustment was a lie, wasn’t it!? What’s wrong!?”

Holding her shoulder, I lifted her up. Twoearle rested her head on my chest.

“M, my body is hot... Can you help... me... Souji-sama...”

Pierced by her bewitching eyes, my heart began to ring alarm bells. What, this girl is so erotic even though she doesn't have twintails.

"W, what do you mean, help you... How do I..."

"....."

Twoearle's cheeks turned red, and she hesitated to speak. If it makes even Twoearle hesitate it must be something amazing.

"...If there's anything that I can do then I'll do it! Please , don't hold back, tell me!!"

She saved the world, she saved twintails. I will do anything she asks.

...I thought I saw her smile just now, but it must be my imagination. And even in a drama, if you take a single frame out of a painful scene it can look like the actors are laughing.

"...To stay for a long time in a parallel world, there is something I need."

"Something you need?"

"Foreign matter to this universe, like people from another universe are... a, nh... naturally eliminated by the universe's self-cleaning process... There is something like a virus in people's bodies that... makes me hurt like this... ! Haah, hah... to protect myself... I need a human from this world... to donate their genetic data... (Seek Time= Zero)"

"Genetic..."

"Souji-sama, I think you may have come to believe I am a shameless woman, but... there is a reason why I've been acting this way... b, because I'm a woman..."

Could this be the reason for all her many eccentricities ?

I'm not so much of a kid that I don't understand the meaning of her words.

I realized that my cheeks were... that I was blushing all the way to my ears.

"I beg you, Souji-sama. Give me... the strength to survive in this world..."

I certainly decided that I would do anything she told me to. But this is—

“Aura Pillar—!!”

“What?”

A current of water blew upward from Twoearle’s feet... or rather from the bed, throwing me up into the air.

“Agaah!”

“Eeeeeeeeeeeeit’s coooold!!”

“For you to lead Souji astray with your ridiculous acting, you chuunibyou patient...! You were so hesitant, but you changed course pretty easily after I became TailBlue, didn’t you!!”

Aika broke through the window with her lance and dropped into my room.

Crushing the question of why these people were in my room as easily as blowing her nose. And I wasn’t surprised to see that she had also crushed the lock, as casually as if she had been knocking.

“A, acting... Twoearle, that was acting just now? You were making fun of me!?”

“No! I, I’m in pa... a, aa~nh”

Maybe because she was hurried, her wheezing was not well acted.

“...Did someone call me?”

I don’t know if her instincts had responded to the word ‘chuunibyou,’ but now even mom had showed up in my room.

“What are you here for? Come on!!”

She didn’t listen to my objection but slid over to Aika with foot motion smooth as a hovercraft.

“My! My my my! Isn't this the famous TailBlue!? You’re Aika-chan, aren’t you!? Finally we meet face to face!!”

“We let the one who shouldn’t find out see us agaaain!!”

Paying no attention to me and my desperation, the celebrity of rumor peeled back both her canines and her thirst for blood and let out a scream.

“Aunt Miharu, please already, lock this woman up underground and don’t let her out!!”

“...Aika-chan~ you will take responsibility, then, I guess~”

“...Huh?”

“What you’re interfering with right now... is that, isn’t it? So can I take this as you saying, please forget about me?”

This chuuni-mom seemed to have been watching since earlier with an indecent smile on her face.

“N, no... I was only...”

What, come on, Aika, now suddenly your face is turning red and you’re flapping your hands.

“—Hey, don’t wave your hands when you’re still holding the spear————————!!”

My room would have been cut into chunks like ingredients for a stewpot if I'd stayed quiet.

Really, what, what is this, this is a situation where I need to think about something but every single thought I have is being cut off in the middle, can I just not think, I have all kinds of different doubts even now, but can I just throw them all out the window.

"By the way, I think I am about to be torn to pieces, how much longer will I be here..."

"You might as well get torn apart once!! It'll be good medicine!!"

"There will be no second time... Your medicine is putting me to eternal sleep... gh-cough."

You might be going easy on her, but that's the Aura Pillar we use to restrain the monsters.

Twoearle was floating with her body folded back into a C, and this time for sure, when she looked like she was about to die, she didn't seem to be acting.

Chapter 4: The decisive battle, the three Twintails

Another meeting had begun in the hall of the Ultima Guil.

"...The number of our brothers destroyed has reached eight troops and seventy-three of the Ultiroids, in a little more than twenty days."

"Hm~mph."

"So these are the Twintails...!!"

The Ultima Guil had been throwing manpower into the fight without a drop in the pace. But the two of them were beginning to get used to battle, with the help of Aika's breakthrough thanks to Shindou Erina's words. They stood together undaunted and forced them all back.

"On the other hand, we have been able to obtain no Elemera whatsoever since coming to this world. Even when we seize Elemera, the Twintails recover all of it."

"If that is how things are, why don't we just capture all the owners of the Elemera and then make an immediate, temporary retreat?"

One of the Elemerians hit the table, snorting. "That just looks like we're frightened of the Twintails and want to run away!"

"But we cannot stand by and do nothing forever."

"The two of them together are formidable. One need hardly mention the red warrior, and the blue warrior may be inferior in Elemera, but her attacks don't have a moment of hesitation in them. Perhaps she devotes herself to destruction in her day-to-day life as well."

Twenty days since the start of the invasion.

More and more, the calm of the Ultima Guil side was starting to break.

Drag Guildy folded his arms together and ground his teeth. That was all it took for every soldier in the room to stiffen in sharp tension like someone was holding a blade to his neck, like he was being scolded implicitly for his own uselessness.

"The power of the Twintails is true. If we continue to try half-ready soldiers on them, all we will be doing is whittling down our own military strength. From now on we will permit none but heroes in this holy war. Are

there none of you whose desire is the stronger to hear that?"

"Yes! Me, then!"

A young voice answered Drag Guildy.

No ambition or calculation was in it, just a simple, straightforward, and pure voice. But though it was too frank, that was the thing that made it strong even in danger. The man was just like iron that had been heated until it was on the verge of melting.

"Oh, the prodigy, the one they call a gift from the Nurse Element, Swan Guildy... no one here can have any objection to you!"

Starting with the ones who had been in a cold sweat, most of the soldiers greeted this with relieved agreement.

"Ha ha ha, but I don't think we're at the point where we suddenly send in a man like you, are we?"

"But we have just been saying that sending some half-baked commander would be pointless."

The strained atmosphere softened, and momentum began to gather. Drag Guildy nodded also.

"...Very well. But before that a test. To see whether you are worthy to fight the Twintails, that is."

His eyes opened with a snap.

A gust of wind blew through the hall — in that instant when no one could feel otherwise, he drew out his own virile sword and stopped it a few millimetres from Swan Guildy's eyeball.

Swan Guildy did not even move.

"Heh... Your courage is considerable. But let's test you just a little more. ...Bring it in."

An Ultiroid entered the room, and with a silent bow came to wait at Drag Guildy's side. A PC and monitor had been placed in the carry bag he was holding.

"The computer from my room... why is it here!?"

Swan Guildy had not shrunk before Drag Guildy's sword though it possessed the swiftness of God, but he was now plainly frightened.

"Silence! This is still part of the test."

"I, it can't be... that bloodstained test, They See Your Eroge... a, aaah!"

Teeth chattering, unable to keep them together. Drag Guildy moved the mouse in silence. The cursor stopped on top of a desktop icon, shaped like a twintailed girl. Swan Guildy's panic doubled. And those around him also knew now what was about to happen.

Click.

The noise of the mouse button sounded like power being switched on to an electric chair.

After the studio logo filled with primary colours, the title screen appeared.

An erotic game. Girls who looked too young for jobs were wearing nurse uniforms. Without a pause, Drag Guildy clicked on "Load Game."

"This is a game that went on sale on this world just a few days ago, isn't it. And it's already complete... you're a greedy fellow!"

The PC screen was projected onto the room's large monitor for all to see, as if to deal the final blow, and Swan Guildy burst out in a squeak.

"Ha ha ha, and this saved data... there's nothing but flesh-tone in the thumbnails, is there!"

"Spare me! Please, spare me!!"

"Ho. But there is just one thumbnail of a girl with blushing cheeks... this one's suspicious."

Loaded.

Two people talking alone, in what was probably the protagonist's room.

But, the girl's cheeks were even blushing red, but still it was a normal conversation from beginning to end, and the scene changed without a single strange thing happening.

"So your childhood friend came to your room, and when the mood started to change, you made sure to save right away, didn't you. Thinking that something special would start to happen between the two of you. But the whole thing ended uneventfully and the date card for the next day showed up on the screen. So disappointing—"

"Yeah, yeah."

"I've had that happen."

The unconsciously sympathetic faces of the spectators.

"Gwaaaaahh—"

Finally, Swan Guildy lost consciousness and slid to the floor.

"Carry him away!"

The Ultiroid lent him a shoulder and dragged him out.

"Hah, pathetic. To be done in by such a small thing — to imagine he could last a single battle with the Twintails like this is hilarious."

But despite his words you could see the affection for his subordinates lurking in his eyes.

“I will go.”

He spoke those quiet words and the hall broke into a roar.

“Drag Guildy-sama himself!?”

“Our commander Drag Guildy-sama, with more power than our great leader... for you to take the field personally!”

“Enough talk!”

Sending his mantle fluttering into the air, Drag Guildy strode from the hall. Instilling the illusion that his steps were rising up from the floor like fire. The transcendent aura of intimidation made it hard anymore to call him a monster. A divine beast — that was the more suitable word.

“Our commander is a terrifying soldier.”

“Of course. In the many generations of Ultima Guil history, he is the only one to have ever made it through

the Transparent Amazone, one of what they call the Five Great Tests."

"What! That terrifying trial where your mail order purchases are shipped to you in transparent packages for a whole year! He is a living legend... I would have died on the first day of that nightmare."

"If it be he, then surely..."

As they looked up at the monitors switching between pictures of the Twintails, the monsters trusted him with their one thin ray of hope.

"Why, why didn't I realize it! If this transient life where loneliness will kill you is ended by the angel that lives in that body—"

"Grand Blazer———!!"

A flash of the flame blade, and I returned Rabbit Guild to dust.

In battle constantly for almost a month, I have cloaked myself in such cruelty that I no longer lend an ear to the words of my enemies even at their moment of death.

...If I don't fight with that kind of hard-boiled setting in my head, the battle with the perverts will eat away at my mind.

And in accordance with my strategy of acting heroic so that the world's pet treatment will not escalate any more, I clearly shout the name of my finishing move.

I still have no idea whether that will bear fruit or not, but the mob of reporters has been gradually getting quieter, and explanations of self-defense goods and strategies for dealing with an encounter with the Ultima Guil have begun to run on TV.

"But, man... The Ultima Guil gang just don't get any better, do they?"

Grinding... might be a heartless word to use here, but that was how the fight was going.

Frankly, they're weak.

As long as they don't come at me from a blind spot like Fox Guildy and his doll fantasies, there hasn't been a single close battle. In the end society has taken absolutely no substantial damage since the start of the war. The whole world is still at ease.

On a Sunday, early afternoon.

I'm outside of Japan, in the kind of mountain range that makes it hard to tell exactly where I am.

In hero stories, the enemies are concentrated near the area where the leading actor lives, but these guys are all over. They appear and disappear like ghosts. Many of them do arrive in Japan, maybe because we were there, but they can show up anywhere in the world.

That used to be my biggest worry. And a major part of what made it possible to cope with it was the teleporter installation that Twoearle had built in the underground base, and the portable transfer pens that she had given to both of us.

When we caught a signal from an Elemerian, we could get there immediately. Although it was a big help that none of them so far had appeared during class.

Today they were in the middle of a mountain range, so there weren't even any rubberneckers. Life was easy.

Why did they appear in this deserted place?

"...His range couldn't have gone as far as wild bunnies , could he?..."

Elemera Orb, Rabbit, recovered. As I took a breath of air, a message came from Aika who had been planning to come in late as backup.

"Are you all right? Is it over already?"

"Affirmative. Coming back now."

I relaxed completely, and went into a huge stretch.

I happened to glance up at the sky and I saw something shining beside the sun.

"_____!!"

A shiver went down my spine, and I was instantly rolling on the ground.

And then the surface of the earth exploded. Whatever it was had fallen with immense force.

“Ngh... wh, what is that!?”

I stared at the silhouette appearing from the cloud of dust.

“...My apologies. I didn’t expect that to be a surprise attack. I thought you would be able to handle such a thing easily...”

The voice was close to a whisper, but it was filled with overwhelming force like the whole land was roaring. What blew away the dust and appeared before me was an Elemerian with an unbelievable sense of presence.

“Uh...”

I swallowed hard. You can see with a look... no, with him, even if you don’t look you can feel it.

This one’s different.

“My name is Drag Guildy! And in love for twintails, I flatter myself that if you lined up all the cosmos and all the world together, not a man would stand to my right!!”

"Shit, even though this guy is serious, he talks the exact same way as all the rest of them...!!"

The enormous monster's shape called to mind the legendary dragon itself, and the fighting spirit he was gathering felt oppressive, even ominous. In just the few seconds I'd met him, I was beginning to feel like all the fighting so far had been thrown out and restarted from scratch.

"...That fool. Though I told him I would go...!!"

Drag Guildy was looking at the space where Rabbit Guildy had disappeared with sorrow in his eyes.

"My subordinates have merely been boring you. But there is no replacement for my precious brothers. So I will strike out at their foes! By relieving you of your Elemera!!"

"What do you mean foes, you just come and attack us!"

I drew the Blazer Blade again, and stood ready.

My twintails swayed in the air currents from the flame.

"All right! ...I'm coming!"

"Wha...!?"

With speed I couldn't even imagine from that tremendous frame, he closed the three-meter distance between us to zero in a flash.

"Hm!"

The great sword swinging down. A squeal of metal that hurt my ears, and a shower of sparks falling.

I had barely managed to stop it, but a shock was running up my arm strong enough to make it numb. The attack had overcome the threshold of the Photon Absorber, the membrane of light.

It was the first time I had felt pain from an enemy attack while I was wearing the Tailgear.

"Ngh, gaah...!!"

"Not a single scratch in the blade, though you blocked with all your might... it's so strong I can hardly imagine a human made it!! It reminds me of the only rival I've ever considered worthy...!!"

"You bastard!"

I swung the sword in a backhand slash as I was fixing my stance, and Drag Guildy made a leisurely block with the flat of his blade.

"Embarrassed at the praise, are you? Are you playing with me, little girl?"

(This guy is in another league...!!)

"In that case, I'll speed up a little!!"

"Uwaah!!"

I thought for a second I was being cut by dozens of swords at once.

I hit his sword away, forgetting to breathe, at the mercy of his speed.

(! This, this swordsmanship...!!)

Following the line his sword was tracing in the air, I noticed something in the trails.

"Ohh! You can see it from just these few , can you!!"

After an exchange of blows that lasted some ten or twenty seconds, Drag Guildy leaped backward to put distance between us in a way that didn't well suit his huge body.

"Drag Guildy... That sword of yours is..."

"Yes, I wield..."

"Red! Are you okay!?"

I said I'd be fine by myself today, but when she got the signal from Twoearle it seems like she came in a hurry.

As TailBlue— ...as Aika swooped down from the sky with her twintails fluttering behind her—

""The Twintail Sword!!""

—Drag Guildy and I shouted those shocking words at the same time. Maybe that was why she pitched forward and looked as though she were about to screw up the landing.

"I see... We have a Souji-type today... seems dangerous ..."

"Yeah, he's a hard one!"

Just looking at Drag Guildy had thrown her off-balance.

So you can feel it on your skin too. His fearful power.

By the way, what's a soujitype?

"TailRed. You terrifying young girl. My slashes with the swiftness of a god... you are the first one whose eyes ever saw through this speed!!"

"Don't look down on me. Of course I'll see it when you trace the shape of my heart out, no matter how fast you do it. Because I've lived my life drawing twintails in my heart!!"

"You might be my enemy, but that's breathtaking! ...In that case, I'll let you get a good, rich taste of it! Of this excellent blade I've honed to the end of all extremes!!"

There was enough power in the foot he slammed down to send the ground exploding into dust.

The slash that he fired out of that acceleration had the speed of God in it, just as he had boasted.

Forgetting myself in the fight, I brandished my sword.

“Gu, uu...!!”

Like the tracks of the glittering stars that form beautiful constellations in the night sky.

With spectacular beams of light, the flashes of Drag Guildy’s sword created the matchless constellation of The Twintails on earth.

“Uoooooh!”

I somehow managed to deal with the blade that filled my field of vision and put distance between us a second time.

“Hah, hahah.”

The giant twisted his mouth into a nihilistic smile as he sent dust rising up from underfoot.

“Uwa————hhahhahhahhahha!!”

Drag Guildy raised the great sword onto his shoulder with its line of warped, crooked blades like the fangs of a dinosaur, and let out a hearty laugh.

“Spectacular!”

For that solid body covered in strong muscle, just a laugh was enough to set the ground rocking.

“Spectacular twintails...! It’s a pity we had to meet as enemies, really!”

“.....”

That’s my line.

A guy like that who could talk about twintails with a laugh like that from the heart — I want to be friends with him too. How great would that be?

“In that tiny body you have the talent to catch every swing of my blade. Your swordplay is like a dance... and more than anything else, the twintails that dance through the air together with it! It’s been a very long time since Drag Guildy has fallen in love on the battlefield!!”

More than the fact that I was fighting on the same level as him, it seems like the twintails were the thing he was thinking and thinking and thinking about. This huge bastard who looked like a soldier with an amazing military record.

“Uumm, for some reason, the more I look, the more I... heh, they’re deep. Although they are loyal to the foundations, every time I fix my eyes on them they seem completely different from before... So this is what ultra-high grade twintails are.”

“What inspection standard is that!”

I wonder whether his aesthetic sense has been cultivated by his long history of battle. The deep scars carved wherever I look on his body speak more eloquently than a thousand words of the number of bloody fights he’s made it through alive.

“Do they bother you, these scars.”

“W, why would they.”

“Heh... With that rough language, you try to stretch toward adulthood. Dear little soldier.”

They say when you're in love even pockmarks look like dimples, but... if you take anything and everything with a kind smile like this, it starts to feel like contempt.

"But look. Drag Guildy can boast that there are no scars on his back!"

"...Hmm, so you mean you've never turned your back on an enemy."

You see that a lot.

"That is true also, of course... but for the sake of the sublime young girl I'll meet someday who will wash my back for me, I am always guarding it!!"

"What have you been fighting for all this time!!"

"You should understand it already. I'm fighting to meet the one who will spend the rest of my life with me, the supreme young girl! And to hold her Elemera in my hands!!"

"Shit, what a guy."

But the giant roaring haughtily with his feet planted wide apart did not have a single speck of hesitation in his clear eyes.

Though I understand it clearly now. Yeah, these guys are a different species.

Our definitions of love are totally different.

To spend your whole life with someone — even those weighty words can be disposed of by a one-sided conquest, by stealing Elemera. They might have intelligence and be able to speak, but... they're different from humanity.

When we were crossing swords I was more than half in doubt, but now I believe it.

I can't imagine this guy's Elemera can be anything other than...

"Blue. I know it. The secret of his strength."

"Eh, uh, sorry, what?"

Even Aika seemed to be getting a little distracted in the presence of Drag Guildy and his overwhelming strength. She sort of looked half asleep, but I think it was my imagination.

“Drag Guildy, you...”

The strongest Elemera, even the core of the Tailgear. The Elemerians so far had all been searching for that, but in the end they had each shifted to their own personal Element.

He alone was different.

“You’re an Elemerian with the real, authentic Twintail Element, aren’t you...!”

“Aye. Our Twintail Elements are resonating with each other.”

“Resonating! Ridiculous, us two!!”

“...So in other words, “birds of a feather?” Give me a break...”

I could hear an uneasy voice from behind me. It had a lot of worry, but I couldn't hear any surprise.

"Hmm-m."

The instant he looked at Blue, Drag Guildy twisted his mouth into a broad smile.

"From the first time I saw a picture, I thought you'd got caught in something, but... Now that I see you up close like this I am sure, o blue warrior. The warrior of that world suggested this to you, did she not?"

"Eh!? What are you talking about!?"

"From your reaction it seems that you don't know yet. The only one who came to challenge us back then... that girl was wearing the same suit that you are. Haha, she had those vulgar breasts that don't suit twintails, so even looking I can hardly imagine the two of you are related."

"The same suit!?"

Twoearle had created the Tailgear to strike at the foes of her world, to oppose the Ultima Guil, she had said.

Aika also stood frozen to the spot without replying, although something pretty rude had been said to her. She was feeling the same confusion.

"But it's a good joke. This world has a warrior in the same suit. And so it will come to the same end."

Drag Guildy quieted his thirst for blood and folded his arms, as he began to speak.

"What!?"

"I'm certain that that other twintail warrior... they called her TailBlue too, didn't they? And she also boasted terrifying strength. She stood in the way of our invasion, and reigned over the world as its protector and Guardian ."

"Wait! So you're saying that you fought with TailBlue before you destroyed that earlier world!?"

Drag Guildy nodded. He hardly seemed to have been speaking at random.

"Why did Twoearle... keep quiet about that..."

"No, I understand. She couldn't win against the Ultima Guil, even with the Tailgear. She already knows how this war will end. If she told us, how could we keep fighting?"

Aika was hardly shaken at all. As though she had been resigned to this from the start.

"I knew she was hiding something from the very beginning. That was the reason I asked to be TailBlue, too. I thought for sure if you were alone, Souji, you would absolutely be tricked."

"...Aika..."

I thought they were getting along like sisters, that they were just joking with each other. But Aika, you...

"She was strong. As strong as the two of you. But that was what killed her world in the end."

Drag Guildy waved an exaggerated arm high in the air , and

"The beautiful fighter that drove away the invaders. Before she knew it, she was being raised up and praised

by the world as a goddess. There was no one who was not charmed by her twintails! We never even dreamed of it, but the whole world began to support our cherished Twintail Element. What more ideal hunting ground could we have imagined!!"

"Ngh..."

Was this the unease that I've been feeling all this time?

The work of the Twintails has been spreading twintails through the whole world, and the number of girls wearing twintails in admiration of us has increased dramatically in less than a month. Like when, all at once, the girls of the world copy the hair and clothing of an idol with centripetal power.

I was celebrating twintails' escape from the minority. But that—

"—You seem to sense it already. That's right, you too will become the saviour of the world, and then, in the end, its destroyer!!"

"Could it be that all the enemies so far were weak because you...!"

"Heh... I don't take any pleasure in throwing away the lives of my comrades for a trick. They're my dear subordinates, my students. If they had managed to win, that would have been best of all."

That wasn't what happened. We continued winning every battle we fought.

So then...

"In the end, with their lives, my followers bought the label 'the invincible Guardian' for you. And I do not deny that I allowed it to happen. We soldiers have merely been entrusted with our orders. If we see a more efficient way, what can we do but take it?"

That's right, this guy... come to think of it, wasn't he the one who appeared in the proclamation of war, the boss! Their goal with that first broadcast to the world wasn't fear. They were telling the world about the existence of TailRed. Absolutely, to plant in the minds of the people of the world the image of the heroine they had been waiting for!

A soldier fighting with the strongest Element, the Twintail Element... on the contrary, that was exactly what they wanted to see...!

"Souji. Twoearle's been taking us for a ride. Even if she isn't an accomplice of these guys, she's probably trying to make other worlds meet the same fate as hers out of despair. She knew perfectly well if we fought the same way, the same thing would happen."

Aika's voice was filled with despair. No anger, not even sadness. Hollow resignation.

"Why... Why did you decide to explain this all to us?"

"TailRed, your Twintail Element is the real thing. I knew when we crossed our swords. That this little girl loves twintails from the bottom of her heart."

I,

I—

"I would have preferred to fight without these tricks, if I could... This is the least I can do, an offering for the dead. So that you'll understand it all after the world is destroyed, so that you won't be lost in the dark."

—I finally feel like the mist has cleared.

“Thank you, Drag Guildy.”

“What!?”

“I don’t need an offering, I’m not dead yet! I don’t have a single worry now.”

There was no reason to be uneasy, I’m glad.

“What are you talking about? You know that even fighting any more is pointless!?”

“It’s fine, it’s not pointless. They’re just planning to steal it all at once. The twintails that are starting to bloom in the world... they’re not just for show, they’re not just for now, they’re real.”

I was so scared.

That twintails had originally just been a minority. That they’d be picked up for a temporary boom and just as easily vanish. That they’d be trampled underfoot.

But if these guys are doing it as a strategy, if this is what they wanted, then... even the girls who are just starting to wear twintails now. The people who have just begun to fall in love with twintails. Doesn't that mean the unmistakable Twintail Element is shining in their hearts?

"If I just beat you here, today, then twintails will spread all over the world, there's no downside! This is the greatest day of my life!"

"Wha, what..."

Drag Guildy stepped backwards, shocked.

Aika's shoulders shook, and finally—

"Pff... ahahahahahaha!!"

She raised her voice and laughed.

"Yo—... you are the real thing! You're not just a twintails idiot, you're a real idiot!"

That's what it looks like.

Because I'm an idiot, there is no limit to what I will believe. And because of that the Tailgear can create limitless strength out of the energy in my heart.

I feel power welling up inside me.

"TailRed... young girl, and your ultimate twintails. Now I admire you from the very bottom of my heart. Your steadfast will shakes still less with the end of all things before your very eyes. Your true beauty is so brilliant that I can hardly look straight at you anymore!"

I thrust the tip of the Blazer Blade at Drag Guildy and spoke, my chest puffed out with pride.

"The end of the world or whatever it is, we already have more than enough of these huge stories. I'm fighting for the thing I love!!"

"So you will hold to your convictions... to the bitter end!!"

"Yes. My twintails will be this world's—"

"Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! That is enough, Drag Guildy!"

“Who the hell are yooooooooooooooooooooooooooou!!
”

It was mud splashed on my once-in-a-lifetime moment of greatness, or it was more like they threw a bomb at it. I screamed as hard as I could.

An unfitting laugh echoed through the mountain forest, many miles from human civilization.

Drag Guildy’s voice raised in anger.

“Who are you? Give your name!!”

Where he was looking—

On a conspicuous large tree, halfway up a sturdy wide branch, stood a lone girl.

“I am the one who has crossed between the worlds to take her revenge, Kamen Twintail!!”

““Bwwwwwwwwwhhhhhh””

At the strange form shining in the sunlight, me and Aika both burst out choking.

“You have finally shown yourself, Drag Guildy.... I was waiting for this moment.”

“Hrnnn, Kamen Twintail, you say!?”

Drag Guildy’s exaggerated surprise.

This guy gives you such a huge overreaction that it might have been worthwhile...

The person standing with arms folded atop the tree was highly suspicious, but Drag Guildy was deadly serious.

On the two sides of the full-face helmet, two wing parts unfolded in grand style.

Evidently those were — twintails.

The problem was that the figure was wearing just the face mask, and below it was a white gown that left very little to the imagination — in short, it was Twoearle herself.

I lost focus and the Blade vanished.

“But, I can’t feel any particular Elemera from you, despite your spirit.. you are hardly about to tell me that you’re here as reinforcement for the Twintails!”

“Reinforcement!? How foolish. Why would we need any more power for you! I cannot let you trick someone you cannot beat and corner them with clever words. That is all I have come for!”

“Whaat!? I can hardly let you get away with that!!”

“But... It looks as though you did not need my help, TailRed.”

Under the face mask, a laugh... and, I understood, a mocking smile at herself.

No, reinforcements would have been great. Just, your timing... the timing of your entrance, all right? Even Aika has been giving me the chance to finish my sentences.

If someone took a picture of my triumphant look from earlier, I’m going to stab myself.

Without worrying about my feelings or any other thing, Two... I mean, Kamen Twintail began solemnly to speak.

“What Drag Guildy says is true. In fact, I had already developed the Tailgear in the middle of their invasion, and I was wearing it myself to fight. You see, the Elemera conversion technology that the Tailgear is based on had been deliberately leaked by the Ultima Guil.”

“Deliberately leaked!?”

She hadn’t imagined things would go that far — Aika was rattled.

“Probably none of the Elemerians below management level know this, but... when they were searching for the girl with the ultimate twintails that day when Red first fought, they were not doing it to steal her Element. They wanted to find the person with the strongest Twintail Element, give her the art of Elemera conversion that was the model for the Tailgear, and set her up as their enemy. That is the same trick they used on my world. And... I... played my role perfectly.”

“”!””

At those shocking words, me and Aika swallowed hard at the same time. That expressionless mask was the symbol of her sad laughter at herself. Although I think she goes a little bit too far in the direction of the clown.

“Even if you had never met me that day, sooner or later, at the hands of the Ultima Guil, you would have become some other warrior instead of TailRed.”

Is that what was happening. For these guys, the strongest Twintail Element wasn’t something to steal... it was just a seed, to bring up flowers blooming across the whole garden!

“That’s right! You... you once fought with us, locked in life-or-death struggle, the strongest twintail! So you crossed the worlds to find us! But, but why, that invincible Twintail Element that shone like it was about to burst, I can’t feel it from you at all now! And we never managed to steal it from you!!”

“I gave that to someone.”

“What!?”

Kamen Twintail turned to look at me, and smiled.

That smile under the cold mask was certainly aimed at me.

"Drag Guildy. I realized it as it was happening, back then. Why the were enemy so weak. Why they were putting so little effort into the theft of Elemera, when it should have been a life-or-death struggle. As the whole world was being dyed the colour of twintails, I had the same feelings that Red is having now."

No, but this is Twoearle. She's smart. She wouldn't have stopped at this vague uneasiness, I'm sure she would have figured it out. And then...

"So I am sure... I could have stopped. I should have done something, anything, I should have tried to behave myself badly so that the world would lose its interest in twintails."

My chest began to hurt as if Twoearle's heart from back then had crossed space and time somehow to beat together with my own.

I could predict what she was going to say next. I prepared myself and bit my lip.

"But I couldn't. I couldn't bring myself to do it. I couldn't cut down the helpless buds of the Twintail Element that were growing in the world. The cute little girls that looked up to me and wore their hair in twintails , I was scared they would go back to their original hairstyles..."

I feel like a word I can't ignore hit my earlobe just now , but neither me nor Aika can cut through this atmosphere. For now, I'll go back to the serious expression I had a few seconds ago.

"Drag Guildy's sword cut through that crack in my heart, and I lost. As I was hiding myself in my base and refining my plans, I let the invasion continue—and the Twintail Element vanished from the world. A world where none could ever love twintails again, a gray colored world..."

The boss who had sealed that doom listened in silence. As if he were accepting his crime.

"In a world where every kind of Element had been hunted to extinction, a world without ambition... I alone possessed the Twintail Element, and the Little Girl Element. When I flipped up the skirts of little girls as

they were walking along the street, I didn't even really get scolded — a cold, heartless world."

"Not a single person could wear twintails, that... that's hell!"

I was making fists so tight that my fingernails were cutting into my palms. I understood the pain of Twoearle 's heart being gouged out as if it had happened to me. I' m sure Aika also felt the same way — her eyes widened and she opened her mouth to speak.

"And so I decided on revenge. And starting from the Tailgear and the fighting data, I analyzed all of the technology I had been given down to the fundamental level. Using the hollowness that I felt when I snuck up on little girls from behind and squeezed their tiny breasts but didn't even get a reaction as my fuel, I perfected Imagine Chaff... and with help from cheerful, healthy little girls, I analysed the techniques of their interdimensional spaceships."

"That's terrible! That's so terrible!!"

Aika twisted back as if she were finally about to grab her head and collapse at the shocking secret that Twoearle had just revealed.

I think so too. I feel exactly the same way!!

By terrible, you mean the Ultima Guil, right? Not the person on top of the tree?

“And then, to put that part of my life behind me, I built one more Tailgear, using my Twintail Element as the core. That... Sou... TailRed, that one is yours.”

“My Tailgear is... So you gave away your own Twintail Element, Twoearle!?”

I stared at my hands without thinking. She gave up her own ability to love twintails. A decision that must have hurt more than gouging out her own intestines.

“And afterward, I gave the Tailgear I could no longer wear to the TailBlue that is here now. That is everything. I am sorry to have spoken in a way that made you suspicious of me.”

“...Wow. This used to be Twoearle’s, huh... So that’s why the chest is like that... Wow...”

Aika laughed, looking down at her chest. She laughed, but there was no light in her eyes.

"So you were tenacious, were you... TailBlue of old... no, Kamen Twintail! It looks as though we were the ones who were tricked this time! I took your deep love for twintails too lightly!!"

Yes, you did.

Easily able to steal it and even cultivate it for food, you underestimated the strength of the human heart. You couldn't have imagined that Twoearle would do what she did.

You might have been born from people's hearts, but at some point you forgot what they are really like.

"...I'm sorry for suspecting you. So the reason you made TailRed a little girl was so that she wouldn't just spread the Twintail Element... so that the Little Girl Element would be in there too?"

"I apologize for repeating myself, but the reason TailRed turns into a little girl is absolutely just my preference. Because it is me who made it, you see... I lost my Twintail Element, and so the remaining Little Girl Element is even stronger, ehehehe—"

A crack echoed that pierced my eardrums, and the big tree swayed.

With a single kick from TailBlue, the tree that Kamen Twintail was standing on had been broken into two neat pieces down to the root.

She had been standing with her arms folded fearlessly, so Kamen Twintail wasn't able to fall safely as she dropped, and she was hit and crushed by the collapsing tree.

"Ugugugu, t... this savage! Give it back! Give me back my Tailgeaaaar!!"

"Heh... But you can't wear it any more, can you? I'll make good, practical use of it..."

Because there weren't any cameras on us right now, I guess. Even though TailBlue was making an evil face that would have ended her life as an idol.

"Fine allies you have there—TailRed."

Why were the corners of Drag Guildy's eyes glistening faintly with light? What part of this fight between two

women filled with darkness pulled on the heartstrings of this long-serving soldier?

"—Yeah. I'd never give them up."

But then I think maybe it wasn't that different from the feeling that was blazing now in my heart.

For the first time in my life, I feel gratitude that my dad, and then my mom, passed down this chuuni flame to me through the umbilical cord.

"Kamen Twintail! Even without exhausting eloquence, I understand. No matter how overwhelmed they might be, these bastards' twintails don't lose even a little of their light. I don't think this tedious talk could have gotten me anywhere from the start!!"

Drag Guildy readied his great sword.

"But no matter how bright they may shine, there remains the unconquerable darkness!!"

Moke————————————, echoed voices like the rumble of the earth.

Enough Ultiroids to blanket the horizon appeared behind Drag Guildy and lined up in formation.

A army appropriate for an invasion of Earth.

If people saw this scene, I don't think that easygoing reporting and so on could possibly continue.

I'd be willing to bet they chose this willderness spot as their starting point to gradually build fear.

"It will be the same as before! Let one become two, it changes nothing! It will only shorten the time until twintails rule the world!"

"Two...? You're wrong there, Drag Guildy."

I pulled up the fallen tree and took Kamen Twintail's hand.

"Red..."

"Twintails can only be twintails once they have the head that holds them up..."

With Twoearle in the middle between us, three lined up together—

“The three of us are the Twintails!!”

Now more than ever, we were the true Twintails.

“Aah, what a gallant and dashing young girl... the drool won’t stop... uwehehehe”

“Yeah, rii, ight... The three of... yeah, the Twintails... sigh~”

The spirit of the Tail on the left was remarkably low. In addition the girl who represented the head was dribbling water with amazing force from a hole in the mask, but I’m sure those were tears. ...I’m sure, those were tears.

<<There are nine hundred and eighty-seven Ultiroids here. If we run into even a tiny bit of trouble, those that are left over will invade in an instant. You cannot concentrate on Drag Guildy alone!>>

Having fled to a safe location, Twoearle... excuse me, Kamen Twintail, sent us a transmission.

"Aika. I'll take Drag Guildy myself. Can I leave the small fry left over to you?"

"In that case I think I've got a much easier job, but... is that all right?"

"It's not easier at all!"

The number of Ultiroids makes my head swim just to hear it. And there's no reason why they can't have even more reinforcements. She has to defeat them without leaving a single one behind, without letting a single one run away, and without having much time. I think her responsibility might be heavier than mine — I only have to concentrate on one person.

"I trust you. I leave it to you, Aika."

"That's my line. After all this buildup, if we lose they're going to laugh at us on the net."

"I don't want that. I guess I better not lose, then."

Taking the moment our two fists met as her cue, TailBlue charged at the Ultiroids behind.

Drag Guildy did not try to hit that unprotected back, but let her pass by with his arms still folded.

"...Ho, so you intend to take up the gauntlet alone. Brave of you."

With a quick attack, I made it inside of Drag Guildy's range.

A height difference like that between an adult and a baby. But although I had to do it looking up, his gaze and mine blended furiously together, neither one giving way.

"You guys can't survive unless you take in Elemera, I'm told. But can't we compromise? You could see what happens if you negotiate instead of stealing everything you get your hands on, or try to come up with some alternative, or something."

"I say not which one is the higher. But discussion is ultimately impossible for you and I, chained together as predator and prey. We are a different form of life from you people."

"...I see."

He hasn't said much, but those heavy words have told me exactly how they live.

And I think he's saying, don't hold back in the fight.

But I've been resigned to that for a long time. Even if it is a joke of an existence, life is life.

As this war turns into something like a job, maybe meeting this strong enemy is a lesson for me.

Even if they are evil, even if they are perverts, even if they are beings of mental energy opposed to all reason on this planet.

Take the weight of their lives in your own two hands.

"—Let's go."

I burst open the feelings I'd burned into my heart, and with them the right-hand ribbon. Waves of heat converged on the palm of my hand, and drawing a spiral , took the shape of a sword. Once more I took a hard grip on the sword of flame, the Blazer Blade.

"Heh..."

Drag Guildy also held his rough sword ready.

Our right feet hit the ground and sent it exploding into the air at the same time. The cobblestone paving of the mountain road broke apart and danced.

"Uooooooooooooooooh!!"

"Nuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!"

With all our strength, we ran head-on at each other.

"Deyaah!!"

The heavy sword that felt like a wall lunged several times in quick succession. I somehow managed to stop it with spirit alone. I handled all the strikes that were sent out without a pause like bolts of lightning, and seizing an instant of opening, sent a single blow with all my strength at the man standing so huge in front of me that I had to almost look straight up at him.

"Nngh!"

Each time I stopped the sword I drove it away, and he retreated as his heels gouged the earth.

“Your beauty and your strength have grown far beyond what they were earlier! It’s like you’re a completely different person!!”

“Of course... I have real spirit now!!”

I dodged him with the recoil from the hit, and cut around behind.

“What!?”

Drag Guildy was too slow to react as I slashed at his back.

“Ngh... A, a wound on my back...!!”

“You wanted me to scrub your back, right! I did it just the way you asked!!”

“I see. A point to you, then!!”

Without faltering at all, Drag Guildy reopened the attack.

"So this is your true strength!"

The Tailgear is driven by the strength of the heart. Now that I know it's not just my own desire to protect twintails, that I've been entrusted with Twoearle's heart too, my Elemera is blazing up stronger than it ever has before!

"In that case, I must put my own life on the line as well !!"

Drag Guildy jammed his sword standing in the ground, crossed both arms, and began to take deep breaths over and over again.

"He's creating delusions, like Fox Guildy...!?"

"Fox Guildy, eh... That guy's vast power of imagination, I have to admit it's greater than mine."

A mysterious light began to shine in Drag Guildy's two eyes, and the fighting spirit surrounding his whole body began gradually to gather to the left and right of his head.

"But depending on dolls is a weakness! To embody your love in your own body — that is the flowering of a warrior!!"

"What!!"

His fighting aura flowed in the shape of twintails from his head, fluttering softly in the wind. It had the radiance of the Elemera Orbs, the light of his life itself.

Numberless rays of light became two bunches, and lit up the great figure I was staring up at with color.

"Drag Guildy——in twintails!?"

"This is my final state of battle... the Twintail Dragon Wing Formation, Twintail Wingbeat!! I've released my Twintail Element to its utmost limit. In this shape I will seek and kill!!"

Seeing this I don't have the slightest particle of discomfort or doubt about whether a man can wear twintails. The casual defiance of throwing away your shy heart draws a clear line in the sand, a magnificent way to be.

He seems different now... That confidence of his, where is it coming from...!?

"That's right. It is not only the love of twintails that is permitted to young men. To wear twintails themselves—that is the duty of those who possess the Twintail Element!!"

I... was told I had the greatest Twintail Element under this star. I was told it was an element that didn't by nature bud strongly in men. And then I put on the Tailgear, and became a twintail myself.

But have I ever felt any pride in that? Haven't I been ashamed of it?

We have the same Twintail Element, but there's such a difference in what we are ready to do. It might not be prudent right now, but I have so much respect for him I wouldn't hesitate to bow.

"I am coming, TailRed!!"

Drag Guildy's attacks were getting faster by leaps and bounds. The strikes coming from that huge, nonstandard sword were turning the earth inside out like aerial bombing.

I let the flame blade accelerate again too. At this speed, the flashes of the swords seemed to materialize and hang suspended in the air.

"I can't believe an enemy made such a deep impression on me! I have to thank you again, I think!!"

"My feelings aside, I should be the one thanking you. When I saw your light, I threw away the mantle of general. I'm back in the days of my reckless love for twintails, as an undecorated soldier!"

The flashes of our swords surpassed even time, in perfect reply.

High heat was stirred by the high speed. The ground was starting to melt with us as the centre.

“But... if you love twintails this much, you should also understand how sad it is to have them stolen, shouldn’t you?!”

“I’ve long since gotten used to your hate! That is the fate of those who live on the hearts of men!”

Then now more than ever, I will strike at the foes of the world that you have stained!!

“Uwooooooh!!”

A single blow of faith. I pushed Drag Guildy back with our swords still pressed together, and struck him away toward the great tree.

“Unbelievable... Having come this far, your light is brighter than ever... Are your twintails bottomless!?”

Although space has no end, it’s considered as high as you can get, but it’s a paradox — even the universe has not yet finished growing.

The heart is the universe.

It has no shape, so it has no end. It grows with no limit .

“Yeah, it looks like that’s right... My twintails are... infinite!!”

Like little sprays of water, gravel and broken rock whirled in the air in the form of magma.

The two sets of twintails shook out of order, danced, and crossed together.

In the centre of hell where the atmosphere itself was slowly disappearing, attack and defense continued with no end.

“When every single one of them has chuuni spirit, it makes me look like the one who’s strange...”

One more person with common sense, just one more. Someone to notice the gap between their life-and-death

struggle that had transcended human knowledge and those lines they were saying, and reassure her.

I can't believe he'd go as far as wearing twintails... in stupidity and in strength, that opponent looked like the real thing.

"It's going to be okay, right... Please don't lose, Souji... "

But the enemy was strong. She respected Souji's determination, but any way you looked at it, he was the one with the heavier burden. Although she had a bitter fight ahead too.

Throwing herself into the middle of a mob of demons that made you wonder if your eyes were working correctly had put Aika at a disadvantage before long. Their sheer number was harder on her mind than she'd expected. Even though normally she hit first and asked questions later, Even though now she could fight as hard as she wanted.

"Moke——!!"

"Ahh, you're in the way... really, come on! When you guys came, you really put his twintail thing into high gear!"

"Mokee!?"

Take responsibility — that's what the huge sweeps of her Wave Lance seemed to be saying, as she intercepted the enemies coming in from all directions.

"So if I'm going to get this fight over with soon, I'm going to need to borrow you guys' power too! Come on, come on, you're a pain so come all get together—!"

<Ribbon>

The Elemera Orb she had recovered from Fox Guildy. As she set its power into motion, the ribbon-shaped parts on TailBlue's head armor began to length and develop, and transformed into something like enormous wings.

Unlike Red, who only used the natural power of the Tailgear, maybe because of her fixation on the Twintail Element, Blue complained much more but there was flexibility in the way she fought.

"Twoearle... do you know how many more there are left!?"

<<There are eight hundred and thirty-one...! Also, it is Kamen Twintail!!>>

"We have a long way to go, huh!"

It was not mock flight through a series of leaps, but an assimilation into the broad blue. Control of the sky. As a bomber, firing with her water current blade, TailBlue slaughtered the Ultiroids, and their numbers slowly decreased. Like chestnuts in a roasting pan, one after another the Ultiroids burst open into the sky.

"Mokeh!!"

"Moke—!!"

"Mokee~~~~~~~!!"

Though she knocked them down and knocked them down they came boiling up. Although Souji's nightmare of an endless battle was now becoming a reality, TailBlue didn't shrink from it at all but kept cutting straight ahead and throwing them away.

It wasn't just Souji who Twoearle trusted. She had given her something too, this hand-me-down.

She reflected on the weight of the gear she was wearing, the bracelet on her right hand that she had stolen after beating her down.

The things Twoearle had said had a totally different meaning now.

It hadn't been able to penetrate Souji's galactic-class thickness, but those feelings were honest.

To say it plainly, she was worrying less about Twoearle's tricks and more about her real motives.

At the end of her rope, she had traveled the worlds, searching and hoping, and after she had exhausted the last of her energy, when she realized, unbelievably, the one she could trust with her will was a man... she must have felt the work of fate, and given her heart. It was a more than good enough reason for a woman to forget herself and fall deeply in love.

But although she had known that twintails were the only things Souji loved, she hadn't put her hair in twintails even once. Not hadn't, but couldn't. Now that

she had parted with her Twintail Element, she didn't have the single easiest way to appeal to the man she had fallen in love with anymore. All she could do was attack him with seduction. ...Perhaps that was overthinking it.

Come to think of it, she said the script she polished over and over again was broken the moment it started, Aika thought with a bitter smile.

The pain that ran through her chest when she saw Souji talking so happily about the student council president. Maybe that was what Twoearle was always feeling.

She understood that the feelings of her rival were real, but... no, unexpectedly, she felt cheerful.

"We've got the same troubles, don't we, Twoearle."

Aika said it in a low voice like a whisper, and then right afterward took a deep breath as hard as she could.

"...Though I can say it with all my heart cause Souji's not here...! You perverts!!"

Her swaying twintails as she fought were as lovely as mermaids swimming in an Emerald sea.

"Stop trying to steal it from me so casually, okay! I've gone through a lot for this hair!!"

The spear thrusts like bursting splashes of water created on earth a sea of stars.

"Don't even look this way, all you're looking at is my poor hopeful chest...!!"

At some time the Ultiroids had begun falling in love with that beauty in the instant between taking the hit and dying.

"Who do you think... this hair has been for all this time , you huge idiot———!!"

Don't say no one could be proud of you.

Although you're a huge idiot.

You're easy to believe, you're easy to fool, you're shaky and you can't help it.

Because you, who dove into the maelstrom of war that day without hesitating... you're my pride.

So I want to come with you wherever you go. I want to be there with you.

“There are exactly two hundred left! Aika-san!!”

“Brake Release!!”

The instant when the Ultiroids began to come in a general attack. Blue had been waiting for it. Unfolding her lance, she used the deep cuts she had prepared in the ground during the flight to release an Aura Pillar at maximum size.

“All together—... Aura Pillar———!!”

The remaining Ultiroids were swallowed up by a gigantic current of water.

“Execute Wa——————————————ve!!”

The spear blade that she had poured her whole soul into fired in all directions like a shooting star, punching through the Ultiroids. The drops soaring into the sky with the explosions traced out a richly coloured arc in the sky.

"..."

As she began to lose consciousness and collapse, in her heart Aika was forming words.

Maybe to her comrade, who was now fighting to the death.

Maybe to the one who had kept on loving a single hairstyle without ever changing since the day they met, her strange childhood friend.

Take responsibility... for being the one who gave me this Elemera———

In the shape of twintails, the rock was scored, and the earth and sand were blasted away.

At some point the tracks of our strikes had completed a ground drawing of twintails.

The unpleasant smell of the scorched and melted ground, and the ultra-high temperatures that were calling every living thing to its end. Already the mountain forest and the path that led to it had lost their original shape, and the world that surrounded us was as red hot as a blast furnace.

“Haah, haah, haah.”

Yeah, this is the limit of my strength. I slide down onto my knees.

“A pity. How close you came... You certainly possess dreadful power. Far stronger than that girl once was. But I suppose it’s because you haven’t gotten any real fighting experience from the weak opponents who’ve been throwing themselves against you so rashly... the difference in our years has decided the battle!!”

“You’re not done yet...”

The attacks had long since lost their brilliance. All my slashes had been taken by the rough blade and swallowed up in its body.

“A wonderful, brave fight it was! The strongest enemy of my career... and the greatest love of my life!!”

"Gh..!!"

The Blazer Blade was hit and sent flying. It drew a parabola as the flame that wrapped it was scattering, with the noise as it cut through the air. The blade hit without strength and stuck standing in the ground.

"Farewell!"

Maybe this purity that didn't even take a pause for regret was part of the aesthetics of war that he had been telling me about before the fight.

Drag Guildy swung his sword down toward the crown of my head—!!

———This is what I've been waiting for!

"Aura Pillar!!"

I made an Aura Pillar open to hold myself.

"Hmm!?"

However, the Aura Pillar was designed as a support technique for confinement. It has no defense power against attacks from outside.

It just barely managed to knock away Drag Guildy's sword, but the Aura Pillar couldn't absorb all of that single blow either and broke and dispersed quietly into the air. He quickly fixed his posture and came once again for the finishing blow.

——But.

In my right hand, appearing from the vanishing flame, I held the Blazer Blade.

"What!? A second sword!?"

"I'm not just in twintails for looks!"

I aimed at the tip of the shoulder of the shaken Drag Duildy, and with all my strength, I hit him with my trump card, the second sword.

"Aaagh!!"

"Break!"

Although he was staggering, Drag Guildy was again raising his sword.

“Relea————————————se!!”

The Blazer Blade changed shape against Drag Guildy’s shoulder, and shot out flame into the air.

“TailReeeeeeeeeeeeeeeed!!”

“Grand Blazeeeeee————————————————————r!!”

The flame sword dropped downward in a diagonal slash. The serpent of fire that was burning the great dragon made me think of a prominence of the sun. And with light that did not compare badly even in the slightest with a sun fallen to earth, brilliant, radiant, fluttering twintails.

“————————Lovely... This must be the hair of the gods... The hairstyle of heaven...”

In the eyes of that soldier who had crossed many worlds in his long history, the sight that made the scales balance even when his life was on the other pan was—was it a hairstyle?

Drag Guildy's strength was finally exhausted, and he sank to the ground on his knees.

“U, ku... was the first sword a trap from the start...?”

“No, I thought of this on the spot... I’ve never tried it before. I can’t do this fiddling little strategy stuff, but, you know—I’m protecting two people, I have to have two swords, don’t I?”

Back when Twoearle was explaining the Force Rivon to me, she reminded me that it’s not there to grant wishes . But when I really needed something, it gave it to me.

“M, magnificent...!! Magnificent, TailRed!!”

“...You mean my twintails?”

Drag Guildy grinned fatalistically.

“No argument there! Waa—hhahhahhahhahhahha!!”

As his roaring laugh rose into the sky, electricity began to spark from his body.

“Defeated by a beautiful little girl... hmm, I don’t think this is so much different from spending our lives together !!”

“Optimistic to the end, aren’t you...”

I didn’t say I’m a man! — or anything so unromantic. He was my enemy, and an irredeemable villain with crimes piled up to the sky, but there was a little part of him I just couldn’t hate.

I think I could have said it to any of the soldiers I had fought before, but...

“Let’s meet again... in the next world.”

“As long as you still love twintails... maybe that will happen.”

As I turned my back in goodbye, Drag Guildy rose in a huge explosion, and scattered.

“U, gh—”

The power drained from my whole body, and I began to collapse spread-eagled on the ground.

I was completely exhausted. The transformation cancelled on its own, without my will involved.

Melted earth and smoldering flames were waiting to catch me where I fell. This is dangerous, hey. I realized it, but I couldn't stop myself from lying down.

"Souji-sama!"

White smoke wrapped the ground as far as I could see, and the red heat began gradually to settle. Maybe because of some special chemical she was using, the fire died strangely fast.

"Twoearle..."

Kamen Twintail walked toward me, lending one of her shoulders to Aika, whose transformation had cancelled like mine. In her right hand, she was holding some kind of spray, probably the thing she had used to put out the fire.

With a terrible scene like this, even if people realize there's been a fight they shouldn't get close for a while longer. I didn't think the masquerade had been broken.

"Aika, are you all right?"

"I, I'm alive. ...I overdid it a little."

Aika struggled to talk, with a voice like she had just woken up.

"Ah, you are so tired that you cannot move, Aika-san. Then let us take the opportunity to roll you on the ground and draw graffiti on your breasts."

"Normally you draw on someone's forehead...?"

"...Are you trying to say it's as flat as my forehead, you ————————!!"

"Why, you are already full of energy~~~~~~! Then please help me put out the fires—!!"

"I can blow out the flame of your life if you want!!"

Even right after such a terrible fight, this made me feel like we'd gone back to our usual lives. When I saw the two of them arguing together, somehow I was so relieved I was close to tears.

"But, Souji, using the Aura Pillar for defense, that was a really good idea!"

"...One time you used it on Twoearle, right? It sent me flying with incredible force then, so... since you were going as easy as you could on her back then, I thought maybe it might work."

"So when I put my life at risk, you caught the thread you needed to win the fight! That is great!!"

"Why don't you let me repeat the lesson...!?"

"We are fine! Why not try it on yourself, Aika-san!!"

At the start she was reluctant to hand over the bracelet, but when I see them getting along so well like this, I feel like there was no one more qualified to be TailBlue's successor.

"You guys are really energetic, I still can't move a muscle..."

In my field of vision, Twoearle's evil smile became a closeup.

"Please leave it to me! At times like these, direct skin-to-skin warmth will do wonders to recover your sexu... er, your muscle strength!"

Taking off her white coat and throwing it aside, and also throwing Aika aside, Twoearle jumped into the air with all her strength. My field of vision was still very fuzzy from fatigue, and it might have been my imagination, but I thought that the amount of flesh-colored surface area was increasing in the middle of the jump...

"Don't take everything but your mask off, that's scary!!"

Clonk, a clear sound, and pwuff, a suspicious sound, in unison.

Noisy everyday life, with no powerful emotion or excitement.

We had kept it safe with our own hands, this irreplaceable time.

Epilogue: Twintails and all of us.

The usual scene as we headed to school, no different from yesterday. Two elementary-school girls crossed our path, humming to themselves. I guess it was Twoearle's confession that made me notice the dangerous look in her eyes as she stared at them.

Trying to distract her as she watched them safely leave out of the corner of her eye, Aika said,

“You know, I wonder what Elemera your mom has, Souji.”

“Hey, stupid, stop it.”

“No, I’m completely serious. I keep thinking about that as I see people walking, ever since I joined the Twintails. What kind of Elemera do they have? Is it a totally normal one, or do they have a really strange one they can’t tell people about? That kind of thing.”

Now that you say that, I think I might have been doing that too.

“Elemera, huh.”

The empty world that Twoearle was from.

If you have a hairstyle you like, or an unusual kind of clothing, especially things that would make people who overhear it laugh in scorn and say "What the hell is that," there are many people who will tell you they cherish it.

You didn’t have to shout it at the top of your lungs, but even so—

“...Yeah, I think, the world where you can live loving the things you love is best.”

“...Yeah.”

It’s fine if people’s minds are half full of nonsense. It’s fine to make a racket. If we can keep them so safe they're not even afraid of the invasion, isn't that best of all?

There were no witnesses to the greatest fight.

They were running the usual happy photos of TailRed on the morning news, with so little change it was like I was watching a videotape rewind. I was even starting to wonder if yesterday’s fight was a dream.

By the way, I saw Mom in the living room putting together a costume that had a touch of bondage to it and realized where Kamen Twintail's mask had come from. I think she's going to wear that costume in the secret base and pretend to be a commander or something. There's no end to my tears of blood.

"Souji-sama, thank you, for striking at the enemy of my world..."

Drag Guildy had brought her world to ruin. So even if we did have a second Tailgear, she said it had been a fifty-fifty chance whether we would win the decisive battle she expected. A gamble.

There was probably still some of the force left, but with their boss gone from the control tower, I think it's going to be all right even if we don't take too much care with the rest.

"...Are you going to go back to your old world once the Ultima Guil has been completely annihilated, Twoearle?"

"I will not go back! It is terrible of you to use a person as stock for a good mood and then chase them out when they become inconvenient! Aika, you are ungrateful. As always!!"

"If you want to be stock that much, I can wring your juice out right here!"

...I think Aika was trying to hide how happy she was, rolling up her sleeves and putting on that threatening act .

You don't want her to go back, do you? I don't either, though.

"Heh... I will not be your victim as usual this time! I have developed a heat ray for the purpose of repelling you! Anti-Aika Mark 1! Fire!!"

"What is this, it's weak."

"What—!? An attack from Anti-Aika, stopped with just one hand!?"

"All right, let's start breaking some bones."

"And it's me as usual—!!"

Don't commit violations of the Firearms and Swords Law and respond with unjustifiable self-defense on the public roads, guys. Please give me a break.

I thought the place for the comeback should have been when Twoearle showed up in her school uniform, but...

"I don't care anymore. You might as well transfer in if you want to. And tossing you into a place with a lot of boys might cure you of that urge to breed."

"But I am not a bitch like Aika-san! Haha, watch me. Because in less than three days, the whole school will recognize me."

"Ngh... that's just fine! Do you think I'm going to lose to you?! I'll break through too!!"

Recognize you... for what?

Do you mean the school suspicious-individual playoffs ? Because when I imagine the things Twoearle will probably do right after she transfers in, I don't think she needs three days, or even thirty minutes.

"But... sorry. I'll apologize again, properly."

"What is going on, Aika-san? Being nice is out of character for you."

"I'm talking about doubting you! I thought you were sneaking around behind our backs, planning something bad. And because of that, my comebacks were getting a little bit harsh..."

Right at the start of the day I'm hearing an amazing lie. That had nothing to do with how hard you were hitting her.

"But I was planning something! The stronger TailRed gets, the more the Little Girl Element buds along with the Twintail Element. The country is overflowing with cute little girls, exactly according to my calculations!"

...That's a lie too, Twoearle.

It wasn't because it was your hobby, or because it was effective against the enemy. It didn't have anything to do with that.

TailRed becomes a little girl because you trusted me with one more part of your heart, also.

That’s why. ...Listen, that’s why, isn’t it? Please tell me that's true.

Aika coughed, and wiping her palm on her skirt, held her hand out to Twoearle.

“I’ll... take good care of the Tailgear. From now on, I’ll think of you as a real friend. But that has nothing to do with what we were talking about earlier, okay?”

“————I understand. Which of us will be recognized first is still a fight!”

They shook hands, and Twoearle broke into easy, dancing steps and ran around in front of Aika. She turned, setting her hair and skirt fluttering, and smiled with the sunlight at her back.

...Why is she standing so still, fluttering in the wind.

The scene is starting to fade to white!

Original work: Twoearle

CAST

Twoearle: Twoearle

Mitsuka Souji: Mitsuka Souji

Bitch: Tsube Aika

...

.....

...Hey, I'm hallucinating some kind of letters, the end of some kind of game is starting.

"Yes, the heroine's dying, so it's a BAD END."

"Aagyaaaaaah the whiteout pastel CG ending of my dreams is becoming a black screen with white text—!!"

You do look like you're having a lot of fun, you two...

I wonder if S and M have something to do with Elemera? Uh, no, that thought did not come from looking at these two. Absolutely.

As I think about such stupid things, in the world where I can I love the things I love, I savor my happiness deeply.

And that's why we, the Twintails, are going to keep protecting it.

I raise my eyes to the sky with new resolution.

"Uwaah!!"

At some point a rectangle had been cut out of the absolutely cloudless blue sky.

It switched to a closeup of a grim animal face, so early in the morning.

<<Uwa———hahahaha! Twintails! I imagine you feel a little hope now, but that will hardly do! The world where Drag Guildy-sama fell suits us for our graves too!

We will fight to the death! We will take any Elemera anyone has of any kind! And we have been joined by strong reinforcements!!>>

"...Yeah, they weren't gonna give up, I guess."

"I won't be surprised if they start coming every day..."

Aika put her hands on her hips and looked up wearily.

<<School Swimsuits!! The garments of water in which we trust ourselves to our Mother Earth! Let us call this Elemera the inheritor of the will of the planet! I am Tiger Guildy, the sworn brother of Drag Guildy, and I will be taking the Elemera of the school swimsuit!>>

"Every day... huh."

I checked the time.

Twenty minutes until the first bell rings. To keep them from making fun of us as we all come in late at the same time, we have to finish this up in ten minutes.

"Hey, Aika, have you picked a club?"

"Huh?"

"Twoearle, too. Do you have something you're hoping for?"

"Hmm."

"I haven't decided yet... Cause there's been all this trouble."

"I want to be with Souji-sama. A young boy and girl, in a locked club room, after school... ufufu"

"Okay. Then..."

I stuck my right arm high into the air in answer to the declaration of war, aiming at the rough bunch blocking the blue sky.

"...Why don't the three of us try and make the Twintail Club for real?"

"Hmmm. What are the club activities?"

Aika turned to check with the grinning Twoearle, nodded, and then turned an invincible smile on me.

"Of course—"

On my raised right arm, the red bracelet glowed.

Translator's Notes

Prologue

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Afterword

Nice to meet you, I am Mizusawa Yume. Thank you for being kind enough to pick up this book.

If you saw the cover illustration and the last battle scene in the frontispiece and thought "Whoa, that looks really cool," so you got interested and bought it, and then you realized "hey, this whole book is nothing but twintails," I apologize.

But... but you knew that already from the title, didn't you! If twintails are in the title, the inside of the book is also going to be filled with twintails!

In any case, I was trying to write a lighthearted story that would be fun to read. If you enjoyed it, I'm really happy.

If you enjoyed it...! I'm really happy——!!

Oh, oh, what's this? There's something other than the *GAGAGA* booklet, there's a postcard stuck in the book too? A reader response card? That's Shogakukan-sama for you! They don't even ask you to stick a stamp on it or anything stingy like that. It's COD mail, isn't it! And it looks like you can even win a book card!

Heh... This roundabout nonsense suits me little. I'll speak straight from the heart.

Please fill out the QA.

You can say your favourite characters are Drag Guildy Fox Guildy Lizard Guildy if you want, so please ! Also, please recommend it to your friends! Thank you very much!

I still can't really believe it got turned into a book, but as I am writing this afterword, I can remember the day several months ago when they told me I won the award like it was yesterday.

I want to express my deepest thanks to Hata Kenjirou-sensei, who served as the guest judge, for choosing this story that I somehow managed to finish. The main reason I submitted it was because sensei was going to read the entries, so I can hardly express how moved I am that he chose it! By the way, I'd like to see Hinagiku and Athena in twintails in the story sometime too.

To my supervisor Hamada, I caused nothing but trouble and I'm sorry. Having the two of us face each other with all our strength over this ridiculous story has been more support to me than anything else. Though I'm a hick who got lost on the way to the award ceremony and ended up late, I've been able to push ahead continuously without losing the chuuni spirit in my heart ! Please guide me for many more happy years!

To my illustrator Kasuga, thank you very much for the supreme illustrations, both impressive and cute! I can't forget how moved I was when I saw the roughs of the scenes. When I heard you said you wanted to draw a picture of that one scene no matter what, my heart really got hot. Afterward too, I'm in your hands!

And to everyone in the editorial department, and everyone who was kind enough to handle completion and publication, I'd like to thank you from my heart.

I'll keep hanging on with all my strength, so please take care of Mizusawa Yume and twintails!

Mizusawa Yume

Thanks, Aereus, for giving me the chance to take over this project, even though it took me seven months to finish. It was a lot of fun for me, and I hope that passion comes through in the translation, despite my mistakes—and there are probably still a lot of them.

In the last couple months I've been staring hard enough at people's hairstyles to make them a little uncomfortable. There are a lot of really nice braids in this area, thick braids in black or brown or gold hair, and some great ponytails, but I don't think I've seen a single pair of twintails on an adult, except for the one that, uh—I've been wearing once in a while, most recently on Twintail Day.

I started reading this series back in May of 2014 on the recommendation of Taruby, and fell in love with it. I'm sorry I couldn't help him solve the ethical problems he had with English translation communities... or keep his comments from getting filled with link spam. Wow.

I do like twintails, and ponytails, but most of all I like genderbending. The Japanese TS scene is great, to the point that people can write popular light novels where genderbending is a huge element, and I want to encourage more people in the English-language world to work on their own ideas. I hope this translation will encourage that.

It's been a bit lonely, so there aren't too many people to thank, but I want to say hi to cautr and some people who helped me on lang-8, thank the people that were kind enough to compliment my twintails... and give my deep apologies and thanks to Mizusawa Yume.

And thank you for reading.

Afterword